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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

AS OUR READERS KNOW, the tradition of aestheticism has given way to a literature which, for its origin and final justification, looks beyond itself and deep into the historic process. But the forms of literary editorship, at once exacting and adventurous, which characterized the magazines of the aesthetic revolt, were of definite cultural value; and these forms PARTISAN REVIEW *will wish to adapt to the literature of the new period.*

Any magazine, we believe, that aspires to a place in the vanguard of literature today, will be revolutionary in tendency; but we are also convinced that any such magazine will be unequivocally independent. PARTISAN REVIEW *is aware of its responsibility to the revolutionary movement in general, but we disclaim obligation to any of its organized political expressions. Indeed we think that the cause of revolutionary literature is best served by a policy of no commitments to any political party. Thus our underscoring of the factor of independence is based, not primarily on our differences with any one group, but on the conviction that literature in our period should be free of all factional dependence.*

There is already a tendency in America for the more conscious social writers to identify themselves with a single organization, the Communist Party; with the result that they grow automatic in their political responses but increasingly less responsible in an artistic sense. And the Party literary critics, equipped with the zeal of vigilantes, begin to consolidate into aggressive political-literary amalgams as many tendencies as possible and to outlaw all dissenting opinion. This projection on the cultural field of factionalism in politics makes for literary cleavages which, in most instances, have little to do with literary issues, and which are more and more provocative of a ruinous bitterness among writers. Formerly associated with the Communist Party, PARTISAN REVIEW *strove from the first against its drive to equate the interests of literature with those of factional politics. Our reappearance on an independent basis signifies our conviction that the totalitarian trend is inherent in that movement and that it can no longer be combatted from within.*

But many other tendencies exist in American letters, and these, we think, are turning from the senseless disciplines of the official Left

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to shape a new movement. The old movement will continue and, to judge by present indications, it will be reënforced more and more by academicians from the universities, by yesterday's celebrities and today's philistines. Armed to the teeth with slogans of revolutionary prudence, its official critics will revive the petty-bourgeois tradition of gentility, and with each new tragedy on the historic level they will call the louder for a literature of good cheer. Weak in genuine literary authority but equipped with all the economic and publicity powers of an authentic cultural bureaucracy, the old regime will seek to isolate the new by performing upon it the easy surgery of political falsification. Because the writers of the new grouping aspire to independence in politics as well as in art, they will be identified with fascism, sometimes directly, sometimes through the convenient medium of "Trotskyism." Every effort, in short, will be made to excommunicate *the new generation, so that their writing and their politics may be regarded as making up a kind of diabolic totality; which would render unnecessary any sort of rational discussion of the merits of either.*

Do we exaggerate? On the contrary, our prediction as to the line the old regime will take is based on the first maneuvers of a campaign which has already begun. Already, before it has appeared, PARTISAN REVIEW *has been subjected to a series of attacks in the Communist Party press; already, with no regard for fact—without, indeed, any relevant facts to go by—they have attributed gratuitous political designs to* PARTISAN REVIEW *in an effort to confuse the primarily literary issue between us.*

But PARTISAN REVIEW *aspires to represent a new and dissident generation in American letters; it will not be dislodged from its independent position by any political campaign against it. And without ignoring the importance of the official movement as a sign of the times we shall know how to estimate its authority in literature. But we shall also distinguish, wherever possible, between the tendencies of this faction itself and the work of writers associated with it. For our editorial accent falls chiefly on culture and its broader social determinants. Conformity to a given social ideology or to a prescribed attitude or technique, will not be asked of our writers. On the contrary, our pages will be open to any tendency which is relevant to literature in our time. Marxism in culture, we think, is first of all an instrument of analysis and evaluation; and if, in the last instance, it prevails over other disciplines, it does so through the medium of democratic controversy. Such is the medium that* PARTISAN REVIEW *will want to provide in its pages.*

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"IN DREAMS BEGIN RESPONSIBILITIES"

Delmore Schwartz

I THINK it is the year 1909. I feel as if I were in a moving-picture theatre, the long arm of light crossing the darkness and spinning, my eyes fixed upon the screen. It is a silent picture, as if an old Biograph one, in which the actors are dressed in ridiculously old-fashioned clothes, and one flash succeeds another with sudden jumps, and the actors, too, seem to jump about, walking too fast. The shots are full of rays and dots, as if it had been raining when the picture was photographed. The light is bad.

It is Sunday afternoon, June 12th, 1909, and my father is walking down the quiet streets of Brooklyn on his way to visit my mother. His clothes are newly pressed, and his tie is too tight in his high collar. He jingles the coins in his pocket, thinking of the witty things he will say. I feel as if I had by now relaxed entirely in the soft darkness of the theatre; the organist peals out the obvious approximate emotions on which the audience rocks unknowingly. I am anonymous. I have forgotten myself: it is always so when one goes to a movie, it is, as they say, a drug.

My father walks from street to street of trees, lawns and houses, once in a while coming to an avenue on which a streetcar skates and gnaws, progressing slowly. The motorman, who has a handle-bar mustache, helps a young lady wearing a hat like a feathered bowl onto the car. He leisurely makes change and rings his bell as the passengers mount the car. It is obviously Sunday, for everyone is wearing Sunday clothes and the streetcar's noises emphasize the quiet of the holiday (for Brooklyn is said to be the city of churches). The shops are closed and their shades drawn but for an occasional stationery store or drugstore with great green balls in the window.

My father has chosen to take this long walk because he likes to walk and think. He thinks about himself in the future and so arrives at the place he is to visit in a mild state of exaltation. He pays no attention to the houses he is passing, in which the Sunday dinner is being eaten, nor to the many trees which line each street, now coming to their full green and the time when they will enclose the whole street in leafy shadow. An occasional carriage passes, the horses' hooves falling like stones in the quiet afternoon, and once in a while an automobile, looking like an enormous upholstered sofa, puffs and passes.

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My father thinks of my mother, of how lady-like she is, and of the pride which will be his when he introduces her to his family. They are not yet engaged and he is not yet sure that he loves my mother, so that, once in a while, he becomes panicky about the bond already established. But then he reassures himself by thinking of the big men he admires who are married: William Randolph Hearst and William Howard Taft, who has just become the President of the United States.

My fathers arrives at my mother's house. He has come too early and so is suddenly embarrassed. My aunt, my mother's younger sister, answers the loud bell with her napkin in her hand, for the family is still at dinner. As my father enters, my grandfather rises from the table and shakes hands with him. My mother has run upstairs to tidy herself. My grandmother asks my father if he has had dinner and tells him that my mother will be down soon. My grandfather opens the conversation by remarking about the mild June weather. My father sits uncomfortably near the table, holding his hat in his hand. My grandmother tells my aunt to take my father's hat. My uncle, twelve years old, runs into the house, his hair touseled. He shouts a greeting to my father, who has often given him nickels, and then runs upstairs, as my grandmother shouts after him. It is evident that the respect in which my father is held in this house is tempered by a good deal of mirth. He is impressive, but also very awkward.

II

Finally my mother comes downstairs and my father, being at the moment engaged in conversation with my grandfather, is made uneasy by her entrance, for he does not know whether to greet my mother or to continue the conversation. He gets up from his chair clumsily and says "Hello" gruffly. My grandfather watches this, examining their congruence, such as it is, with a critical eye, and meanwhile rubbing his bearded cheek roughly, as he always does when he reasons. He is worried; he is afraid that my father will not make a good husband for his oldest daughter. At this point something happens to the film, just as my father says something funny to my mother: I am awakened to myself and my unhappiness just as my interest has become most intense. The audience begins to clap impatiently. Then the trouble is attended to, but the film has been returned to a portion just shown, and once more I see my grandfather rubbing his bearded cheek, pondering my father's character. It is difficult to get back into the picture once more and forget myself, but as my mother giggles at my father's words, the darkness drowns me.

My father and mother depart from the house, my father shaking hands with my grandfather once more, out of some unknown uneasiness. I stir uneasily also, slouched in the hard chair of the theatre.

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Where is the older uncle, my mother's older brother? He is studying in his bedroom upstairs, studying for his final examinations at the College of the City of New York, having been dead of lobar pneumonia for the last twenty-one years. My mother and father walk down the same quiet streets once more. My mother is holding my father's arm and telling him of the novel she has been reading and my father utters judgments of the characters as the plot is made clear to him. This is a habit which he very much enjoys, for he feels the utmost superiority and confidence when he is approving or condemning the behavior of other people. At times he feels moved to utter a brief "Ugh," whenever the story becomes what he would call sugary. My mother feels satisfied by the interest she has awakened; and she is showing my father how intelligent she is and how interesting.

They reach the avenue, and the streetcar leisurely arrives. They are going to Coney Island this afternoon, although my mother really considers such pleasures inferior. She has made up her mind to indulge only in a walk on the boardwalk and a pleasant dinner, avoiding the riotous amusements as being beneath the dignity of so dignified a couple.

My father tells my mother how much money he has made in the week just past, exaggerating an amount which need not have been exaggerated. But my father has always felt that actualities somehow fall short, no matter how fine they are. Suddenly I begin to weep. The determined old lady who sits next to me in the theatre is annoyed and looks at me with an angry face, and being intimidated, I stop. I drag out my handkerchief and dry my face, licking the drop which has fallen near my lips. Meanwhile I have missed something, for here are my father and mother alighting from the streetcar at the last stop, Coney Island.

III

They walk toward the boardwalk and my mother commands my father to inhale the pungent air from the sea. They both breathe in deeply, both of them laughing as they do so. They have in common a great interest in health, although my father is strong and husky, and my mother is frail. They are both full of theories about what is good to eat and not good to eat, and sometimes have heated discussions about it, the whole matter ending in my father's announcement, made with a scornful bluster, that you have to die sooner or later anyway. On the boardwalk's flagpole, the American flag is pulsing in an intermittent wind from the sea.

My father and mother go to the rail of the boardwalk and look down on the beach where a good many bathers are casually walking about. A few are in the surf. A peanut-whistle pierces the air with

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its pleasant and active whine, and my father goes to buy peanuts. My mother remains at the rail and stares at the ocean. The ocean seems merry to her; it pointedly sparkles and again and again the pony waves are released. She notices the children digging in the wet sand, and the bathing costumes of the girls who are her own age. My father returns with the peanuts. Overhead the sun's lightning strikes and strikes, but neither of them are at all aware of it. The boardwalk is full of people dressed in their Sunday clothes and casually strolling. The tide does not reach as far as the boardwalk, and the strollers would feel no danger if it did. My father and mother lean on the rail of the boardwalk and absently stare at the ocean. The ocean is becoming rough; the waves come in slowly, tugging strength from far back. The moment before they somersault, the moment when they arch their backs so beautifully, showing white veins in the green and black, that moment is intolerable. They finally crack, dashing fiercely upon the sand, actually driving, full force downward, against it, bouncing upward and forward, and at last petering out into a small stream of bubbles which slides up the beach and then is recalled. The sun overhead does not disturb my father and my mother. They gaze idly at the ocean, scarcely interested in its harshness. But I stare at the terrible sun which breaks up sight, and the fatal merciless passionate ocean. I forget my parents. I stare fascinated, and finally, shocked by their indifference, I burst out weeping once more. The old lady next to me pats my shoulder and says "There, there, young man, all of this is only a movie, only a movie." —but I look up once more at the terrifying sun and the terrifying ocean, and being unable to control my tears I get up and go to the men's room, stumbling over the feet of the other people seated in my row.

IV

When I return, feeling as if I had just awakened in the morning sick for lack of sleep, several hours have apparently passed and my parents are riding on the merry-go-round. My father is on a black horse, my mother on a white one, and they seem to be making an eternal circuit for the single purpose of snatching the nickel rings which are attached to an arm of one of the posts. A hand organ is playing; it is inseparable from the ceaseless circling of the merry-go-round.

For a moment it seems that they will never get off the carousel, for it will never stop, and I feel as if I were looking down from the fiftieth story of a building. But at length they do get off; even the hand-organ has ceased for a moment. There is a sudden and sweet stillness, as if the achievement of so much motion. My mother has

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acquired only two rings, my father, however, ten of them, although it was my mother who really wanted them.

They walk on along the boardwalk as the afternoon descends by imperceptible degrees into the incredible violet of dusk. Everything fades into a relaxed glow, even the ceaseless murmuring from the beach. They look for a place to have dinner. My father suggests the best restaurant on the boardwalk and my mother demurs, according to her principles of economy and housewifeliness.

However they do go to the best place, asking for a table near the window so that they look out upon the boardwalk and the mobile ocean. My father feels omnipotent as he places a quarter in the waiter's hand in asking for a table. The place is crowded and here too there is music, this time from a kind of string-trio. My father orders with a fine confidence.

As their dinner goes on, my father tells of his plans for the future and my mother shows with expressive face how interested she is, and how impressed. My father becomes exultant, lifted up by the waltz that is being played, and his own future begins to intoxicate him. My father tells my mother that he is going to expand his business, for there is a great deal of money to be made. He wants to settle down. After all, he is twenty-nine, he has lived by himself since his thirteenth year, he is making more and more money, and he is envious of his friends when he visits them in the security of their homes, surrounded, it seems, by the calm domestic pleasures, and by delightful children, and then as the waltz reaches the moment when the dancers all swing madly, then, then with awful daring, then he asks my mother to marry him, although awkwardly enough and puzzled as to how he had arrived at the question, and she, to make the whole business worse, begins to cry, and my father looks nervously about, not knowing at all what to do now, and my mother says: "It's all I've wanted from the first moment I saw you," sobbing, and he finds all of this very difficult, scarcely to his tate, scarcely as he thought it would be, on his long walks over Brooklyn Bridge in the revery of a fine cigar; and it was then, at that point, that I stood up in the theater and shouted: "Don't do it! It's not too late to change your minds, both of you. Nothing good will come of it, only remorse, hatred, scandal, and two children whose characters are monstrous." The whole audience turned to look at me, annoyed, the usher came hurrying down the aisle flashing his searchlight, and the old lady next to me tugged me down into my seat, saying: "Be quiet. You'll be put out, and you paid thirty-five cents to come in." And so I shut my eyes because I could not bear to see what was happening. I sat there quietly.

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V

But after awhile I begin to take brief glimpses and at length I watch again with thirsty interest, like a child who tries to maintain his sulk when he is offered the bribe of candy. My parents are now having their picture taken in a photographer's booth along the boardwalk. The place is shadowed in the mauve light which is apparently necessary. The camera is set to the side on its tripod and looks like a Martian man. The photographer is instructing my parents in how to pose. My father has his arm over my mother's shoulder, and both of them smile emphatically. The photographer brings my mother a bouquet of flowers to hold in her hand, but she holds it at the wrong angle. Then the photographer covers himself with the black cloth which drapes the camera, and all that one sees of him is one protruding arm and the hand with which he holds tightly to the rubber ball which he squeezes when the picture is taken. But he is not satisfied with their appearance. He feels that somehow there is something wrong in their pose. Again and again he comes out from his hiding place with new directions. Each suggestion merely makes matters worse. My father is becoming impatient. They try a seated pose. The photographer explains that he has his pride, he wants to make beautiful pictures, he is not merely interested in all of this for the money. My father says: "Hurry up, will you? We haven't got all night." But the photographer only scurries about apologetically, issuing new directions. The photographer charms me, and I approve of him with all my heart, for I know exactly how he feels, and as he criticizes each revised pose according to some obscure idea of rightness, I become quite hopeful. But then my father says angrily: "Come on, you've had enough time, we're not going to wait any longer." And the photographer, sighing unhappily, goes back into the black covering, and holds out his hand, saying: "One, two, three. Now!", and the picture is taken, with my father's smile turned to a grimace and my mother's bright and false. It takes a few minutes for the picture to be developed and as my parents sit in the curious light they become depressed.

VI

They have passed a fortune-teller's booth and my mother wishes to go in, but my father does not. They begin to argue about it. My mother becomes stubborn, my father once more impatient. What my father would like to do now is walk off and leave my mother there, but he knows that that would never do. My mother refuses to budge. She is near tears, but she feels an uncontrollable desire to hear what the palm-reader will say. My father consents angrily and they both

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go into the booth which is, in a way, like the photographer's, since it is draped in black cloth and its light is colored and shadowed. The place is too warm, and my father keeps saying that this is all nonsense, pointing to the crystal ball on the table. The fortune-teller, a short, fat woman garbed in robes supposedly exotic, comes into the room and greets them, speaking with an accent. But suddenly my father feels that the whole thing is intolerable; he tugs at my mother's arm but my mother refuses to budge. And then, in terrible anger, my father lets go of my mother's arm and strides out, leaving my mother stunned. She makes a movement as if to go after him, but the fortune-teller holds her and begs her not to do so, and I in my seat in the darkness am shocked and horrified. I feel as if I were walking a tight-rope one hundred feet over a circus audience and suddenly the rope is showing signs of breaking, and I get up from my seat and begin to shout once more the first words I can think of to communicate my terrible fear, and once more the usher comes hurrying down the aisle flashing his searchlight, and the old lady pleads with me, and the shocked audience has turned to stare at me, and I keep shouting: "What are they doing? Don't they know what they are doing? Why doesn't my mother go after my father and beg him not to be angry? If she does not do that, what will she do? Doesn't my father know what he is doing?" But the usher has seized my arm and is dragging me away, and as he does so, he says: "What are *you* doing? Don't you know you can't do things like this, you can't do whatever you want to do, even if other people aren't about? You will be sorry if you do not do what you should do. You can't carry on like this, it is not right, you will find that out soon enough, everything you do matters too much," and as he said that, dragging me through the lobby of the theater, into the cold light, I woke up into the bleak winter morning of my twenty-first birthday, the window-sill shining with its lip of snow, and the morning already begun.

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THE DWARF

Now it is September and the web is woven.
The web is woven and you have to wear it.

The winter is made and you have to bear it,
The winter web, the winter woven, wind and wind,

For all the thoughts of summer that go with it
In the mind, pupa of straw, moppet of rags.

It is the mind that is woven, the mind that was jerked
And tufted in straggling thunder and shattered sun.

It is all that you are, the final dwarf of you,
That is woven and woven and waiting to be worn,

Neither as mask nor as garment but as a being,
Torn from insipid summer, for the mirror of cold,

Sitting beside your lamp, there citron to nibble
And coffee dribble . . . Frost is in the stubble.

WALLACE STEVENS

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FLAUBERT'S POLITICS*

Edmund Wilson

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT has figured for decades as the great glorifier and practitioner of literary art at the expense of human affairs both public and personal. We have heard about his asceticism, his nihilism, his consecration to the search for *le mot juste*. His admirers have tended to praise him on the same assumption: that he has no moral or social interests. At most, *Madame Bovary* has been taken as a parable of the romantic temperament.

Really Flaubert owed his superiority to those of his contemporaries—Gautier, for example—who professed the same literary creed, to the seriousness of his concern with the large questions of human destiny. It was a period when the interest in history was intense; and Flaubert, in his intellectual tastes as well as in his personal relations, was almost as close to the historians Michelet, Renan and Taine, and to the historical critic Sainte-Beuve, as to Gautier and Baudelaire. In the case of Taine and Sainte-Beuve, he came to deplore their preoccupation in their criticism with the social aspects of literature at the expense of all its other values; but he himself always seems to see humanity in social terms and historical perspective. His point of view may be gauged pretty accurately from his comments in one of his letters on Taine's *History of English Literature*: "There is something else in art beside the milieu in which it is practised and the physiological antecedents of the worker. On this system you can explain the series, the group, but never the individuality, the special fact which makes him this person and not another. This method results inevitably in leaving *talent* out of consideration. The masterpiece has no longer any significance except as an historical document. It is the old critical method of La Harpe precisely turned around. People used to believe that literature was an altogether personal thing and that books fell out of the sky like meteors. Today they deny that the will and the absolute have any reality at all. The truth, I believe, lies between the two extremes."

But it was also a period in France—Flaubert's lifetime, 1820-81—of alternating republics and monarchies, of bogus emperors and defeated revolutions, when political ideas were in confusion. The

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* Parts of this essay are based on an article which appeared in the *Herald-Tribune* book supplement, February 21, 1932.

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French historians of the Enlightenment tradition, which was the tradition of the Revolution, were steadily becoming less hopeful; and a considerable group of the novelists and poets held political and social issues in contempt and staked their careers on art as an end in itself: their conception of their relation to society was expressed in their damnation of the bourgois, who gave his tone to all the world, and their art was a defiance of him. The Goncourts in their journal have put the attitude on record: "Lying phrases, resounding words, blarny —that's just about all we get from the political men of our time. Revolutions are a simple *déménagement* followed by the moving back of the same ambitions, corruptions and villainies into the apartment which they have just been moved out of—and all involving great breakage and expense. No political morals whatever. When I look about me for a disinterested opinion, I can't find a single one. People take risks and compromise themselves on the chance of getting future jobs. . . . You are reduced, in the long run, to disillusion, to a disgust with all beliefs, a tolerance of any power at all, an indifference to political passion, which I find in all my literary friends, and in Flaubert as in myself. You come to see that you must not die for any cause, that you must live with any government that exists, no matter how antipathetic it may be to you—you must believe in nothing but art and profess only literature. All the rest is a lie and a booby-trap." In the field of art, at least, it was possible, by heroic effort, to prevent the depreciation of values.

This attitude, as the Goncourts say, Flaubert fully shared. "Today," he wrote Louise Colet in 1853: "I even believe that a thinker (and what is an artist if he is not a triple thinker?) should have neither religion nor fatherland nor even any social conviction. It seems to me that absolute doubt is now indicated so clearly that it would be almost an absurdity to want to formulate it." And "the citizens who work themselves up for or against the Empire or the Republic," he wrote George Sand in 1869, "seem to be just about as useful as the ones who used to argue about efficacious grace and efficient grace." Nothing exasperated him more—and we may sympathize with him today—than the idea that the soul is to be saved by the profession of correct political opinions.

Yet Flaubert is a thundering idealist. "The idea" which turns up in his letters of the fifties—"genius like a powerful horse drags humanity at her tail along the roads of the idea," in spite of all that human stupidity can do to rein her in—is evidently, under its guise of art, none other than the Hegelian "Idea," which served Marx and so many others under a variety of different guises. There are great forces in humanity, Flaubert feels, which the present is somehow suppressing but which may some day be gloriously set free. "The

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soul is asleep today, drunk with the words she has listened to, but she will experience a wild awakening in which she will give herself up to the ecstasies of liberation, for there will be nothing more to constrain her, neither government nor religion, not a formula; the republicans of all shades of opinion seem to me the most ferocious pedagogues, with their dream of organizations, of a society constructed like a convent."

When he reasons about society—which he never does except in his letters—his conceptions seem incoherent. But Flaubert, who believed that the artist should be a triple thinker and who was certainly one of the great minds of his time—was the kind of imaginative writer who works dramatically in images and does not deal at all in ideas. His informal expressions of his general opinions are as unsystematized and impromptu as his books are well-built and precise. But it is worth while to quote a few from his letters because, though they are so very far from formulating a social philosophy—when George Sand accused him of not having one, he admitted it—they do indicate the instincts and emotions which are the prime movers in the world of his art.

Flaubert is opposed to the socialists because he regards them as materialistic and because he dislikes their authoritarianism, which he says derives straight from the tradition of the Church. Yet they have "denied *pain,* have blasphemed three-quarters of modern poetry, the blood of Christ, which quickens in us." And: "O socialists, there is your ulcer: the ideal is lacking to you; and that very matter which you pursue slips through your fingers like a wave; the adoration of humanity for itself and by itself (which brings us to the doctrine of the useful in Art, to the theories of public safety and reason of state, to all the injustices and all the intolerances, to the immolation of the right, to the levelling of the Beautiful), that cult of the belly, I say, breeds wind (pardon the pun)." One thing he makes clear by reiteration through the various periods of his life his disapproval of the ideal of equality. What is wanted, he keeps insisting, is "justice"; and behind this demand for justice is evidently Flaubert's resentment, arising from his own literary experience, against the false reputations, the undeserved rewards and the stupid repressions of the Second Empire. And he was skeptical of popular education and opposed to universal suffrage.

Yet among the contemporaries whom he admired most were democrats, humanitarians, and reformers. "You are certainly the French author," he wrote Michelet, "whom I have read and reread most"; and he said of Victor Hugo that Hugo was the living man "in whose skin" he would be happiest to be. George Sand was one of his closest friends. *Un Coeur Simple* was written for her—apparently to

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answer her reproach that Art was "not merely criticism and satire" and to show her that he, too, had a heart.

When we come to Flaubert's books themselves, we find a much plainer picture of things.

It is not true, as is sometimes supposed, that he disclaimed any moral intention. He deliberately refrained in his novels from commenting on the action in his own character: "the artist ought not to appear in his work any more than God in nature." But, like God, he rules his universe through law; and the reader, from what he hears and sees, must infer the moral system.

What *are* we supposed to infer from Flaubert's work? His general historical point of view is, I believe, pretty well known. He held that "the three great evolutions of humanity" had been "*paganisme, christianisme, muflisme (muckerism),*" and that Europe was in the third of these phases. Paganism he depicted in *Salammbô* and in the short story *Hérodias*. The Carthaginians of *Salammbô* had been savage barbarians: they had worshipped serpents, crucified lions, sacrificed their children to Moloch and trampled armies down with herds of elephants; but they had slaughtered, lusted and agonized superbly. Christianity is exemplified in the two saints' legends, *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* and *La Légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier*. The Christian combats his lusts, he expiates human cruelty; but this attitude, too, is heroic: Saint Anthony, who inhabits the desert, Saint Julien, who lies down with the leper, have pushed to their furthest limits the virtues of abnegation and humility. But when we come to the *muflisme* of the nineteenth century—in *Madame Bovary* and *L'Education Sentimentale*—all is meanness, mediocrity and timidity.

The villain here is, of course, the bourgeois; and it is true that these two novels of Flaubert damn the contemporary world as flatly as the worlds of Salammbô and Saint Anthony have been roundly and dogmatically exalted. But in these pictures of modern life there is a greater complexity of human values and an analysis of social processes which does not appear in the books about the past.

This social analysis of Flaubert's has, it seems to me, been too much disregarded, and this has resulted in the underestimation of one of his greatest books, *L'Education Sentimentale*.

In *Madame Bovary,* Flaubert criticizes the nostalgia for the exotic which played such a large part in his own life and which led him to write *Salammbô* and *Saint Antoine*. What cuts Flaubert off from the other romantics and makes him primarily a social critic is his grim realization of the futility of dreaming about the splendors of the orient and the brave old days of the past as an antidote to

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bourgeois society. Emma Bovary, the wife of a small country doctor, is always seeing herself in some other setting, imagining herself someone else. She will never face her situation as it is, with the result that she is eventually undone by the realities she has been trying to ignore. The upshot of all Emma's yearnings for a larger and more glamorous life is that her poor little daughter, left an orphan by Emma's suicide and the death of her father, is sent to work in a cotton mill.

The socialist of Flaubert's time might perfectly have approved of this: while the romantic individualist deludes himself with dreams in the attempt to evade bourgeois society and only succeeds in destroying himself, he lets humanity fall a victim to the industrial-commercial processes, which, unimpeded by his dreaming, go on.

Flaubert had more in common and had perhaps been influenced more by the socialist thought of his day than he would ever have allowed himself to confess. In his novels, it is never the nobility, who are indistinguishable for mediocrity from the bourgeoisie, but the peasants and working people whom he habitually uses as touchstones to bring out the meanness and speciousness of the bourgeois. One of the most memorable scenes in *Madame Bovary* is the agricultural exhibition at which the pompous local dignitaries award a medal to an old farm servant for forty-five years of service on the same farm. Flaubert has told us about the bourgeois at length, made us listen to a long speech by a town councilor on the flourishing state of France; and now he describes the peasant—scared by the flags and the drums and by the gentlemen in black coats and not understanding what is wanted of her. Her long and bony hands, with which she has worked all her life in greasy wool, stable dust and lye, still seem dirty, although she has just washed them, and they hang half open, as if to present the testimony of her toil. There is no tenderness or sadness in her face: it has a rigidity almost monastic. And her long association with animals has given her something of their placidity and dumbness. "So she stood before those florid bourgeois, that half-century of servitude." And the heroine of *Un Coeur Simple,* a domestic servant who devotes her whole life to the service of a provincial family and gets not one ray of love in return, has a similar dignity and pathos.

But it is in *L'Education Sentimentale* that Flaubert's account of society comes closest to socialist theory. Indeed, his presentation here of the Revolution of 1848 parallels in so striking a manner Marx's analysis of the same events in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* that it is worth while to bring together into the same focus the diverse figures of Flaubert and Marx in order to see how two great minds of the last century, pursuing courses so apparently

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divergent, arrived at identical interpretations of the happenings of their own time.

When we do this, we become aware that Marx and Flaubert started from very similar assumptions and that they were actuated by moral aims almost equally uncompromising. Both implacably hated the bourgeois, and both were resolved at any cost of worldly success to keep outside the bourgeois system. And Marx, like Flaubert, shared to some degree the romantic bias in favor of the past. Karl Marx can, of course, hardly be said to have had a very high opinion of any period of human history; but in comparison with the capitalist nineteenth century he betrayed a certain tenderness for Greece and Rome and the Middle Ages. He pointed out that the slavery of the ancient world had at least purchased the "full development" of the masters and that a certain Antipater of Thessalonica had joyfully acclaimed the invention of the water wheel for grinding corn because it would set free the female slaves who had formerly had to do this work, whereas the bourgeois economists had seen in machinery only a means for making the workers work faster and longer in order "to transform a few vulgar and half-educated upstarts into 'eminent cotton spinners,' 'extensive sausage makers' and 'influential blacking dealers'." And he had also a soft spot for the feudal system before the nobility had revolted against the Crown and while the rights of all classes, high and low, were still guaranteed by the king. Furthermore, the feudal lords, he insisted, had spent their money lavishly when they had it, whereas it was of the essence of capitalism that the capitalist saved his money and invested it, only to save and reinvest the profits.

Karl Marx's comment on his time was *The Communist Manifesto*. What is the burden of the great social novel of Flaubert? Frédéric Moreau, the hero of *L'Education Sentimentale,* is a sensitive and intelligent young man with an income; but he has no stability of purpose and is capable of no emotional integrity. He becomes so aimlessly, so will-lessly, involved in love affairs with different types of women that he is unable to make anything real out of any of them: they trip each other up until in the end he is left with nothing. He is most in love from the very beginning with the virtuous wife of a sort of glorified drummer, who is engaged in more or less shady business enterprises; but, what with his timidity and her virtue, he never gets anywhere with her—even though she loves him in return —and leaves her in the hands of the drummer. Flaubert makes it plain to us, however, that Frédéric and the vulgar husband at bottom represent the same thing: Frédéric is only the more refined as well as the more incompetent side of the middle-class mediocrity of which the promoter is the more flashy and active.

And so in the case of the other characters, the representatives

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of journalism, art and drama and of the various political factions of the time and the remnants of the old nobility, Frédéric finds the same shoddiness and lack of principle which are gradually revealed in himself—the same qualities which render so odious to him the banker M. Dambreuse, the type of the rich and powerful class of the age. M. Dambreuse is always ready to trim his sails to any political party, monarchist or republican, which seems to have a chance of success. "Most of the men who were there," Flaubert writes of the guests at M. Dambreuse's house, "had served at least four governments; and they would have sold France or the human race in order to guarantee their fortune, to spare themselves a difficulty or anxiety, or even merely from baseness, instinctive adoration of force." *"Je me moque des affaires!"* cries Frédéric when the guests at M. Dambreuse's are complaining that criticism of the government hurts business; but he always comes back to hoping to profit by M. Dambreuse's investments and position.

The only really sympathetic characters in *L'Education Sentimentale* are, again, the representatives of the people. Rosanette, Frédéric's mistress, is the daughter of poor workers in the silk mills, who sold her at fifteen to an old bourgeois. Her liaison with Frédéric is a symbol of the disastrously unenduring union between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, of which Marx, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* had written. After the suppression of the workers' insurrection during the June days of '48, Rosanette gives birth to a weakly child, which dies while Frédéric is already arranging a love affair with the dull wife of the banker. Frédéric believes that Mme. Dambreuse will be able to advance his interests. And bourgeois socialism gets a very Marxist treatment—save in one respect, which we shall note in a moment—in the character of Sénécal, who is eternally making himself unpleasant about communism and the welfare of the masses, for which he is apparently ready to fight to the last barricade. When Sénécal, however, gets a job as foreman in a pottery factory, he turns out to be an inexorable little tyrant; and when it begins to appear, after the putting down of the June riots, that the reaction is sure to triumph, he begins to decide, like our Fascists today, that the strong centralization of the government is already itself a kind of communism and that authority is in itself a great thing.

On the other hand, there is the clerk Dussardier, a strapping and stupid fellow and one of the few honest characters in the book. When we first see him he has just knocked down a policeman in a political brawl on the street. Later, when the National Guard, of which Dussardier is a member, turns against the proletariat in the interests of law and order, Dussardier fells one of the insurgents from the top of a barricade and gets at the same time a bullet in the leg, thereby be-

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coming a great hero of the bourgeois. But Dussardier himself is unhappy. The boy he had knocked down had wrapped the tricolor around him and shouted to the National Guard: "Are you going to fire on your brothers?" Dussardier isn't at all sure that he oughtn't to have been on the other side. His last appearance is at the climax of the story, constitutes, indeed, the climax: he turns up in a proletarian street riot, which the cavalry and police are putting down. Dussardier refuses to move on, crying *"Vive la République!";* and Frédéric comes along just in time to see one of the policemen kill him. Then he recognizes the policeman: it is the socialist, Sénécal.

L'Education Sentimentale, unpopular when it first appeared, is likely, if we read it in our youth, to prove baffling and even repellent. It sounds as if it were going to be a love story, but the love affairs turn out so consistently to be either unfulfilled or lukewarm that we find ourselves irritated or depressed. Is it a satire? It is too real for a satire. Yet it does not seem to have the kind of vitality which we are accustomed to look for in a novel .

Yet, although we may rebel, as we first read it, against *L'Education Sentimentale,* we find afterwards that it has stuck in our crop. If it is true, as Bernard Shaw has said, that *Das Kapital* makes us see the nineteenth century "as if it were a cloud passing down the wind, changing its shape and fading as it goes," so that we are never afterward able to forget that "capitalism, with its wage slavery, is only a passing phase of social development, following primitive communism, chattel slavery and feudal serfdom into the past"—so Flaubert's novel plants deep in our mind an idea which we never get quite rid of —the suspicion that our middle class society of business men, bankers and manufacturers, and people who live on or deal in investments, so far from being redeemed by its culture, has ended by cheapening and invalidating culture: politics, science and art—and not only these but the ordinary human relations, love, friendship and loyalty to cause—till the whole civilization has seemed to dwindle.

But fully to appreciate the book, one must have had time to see something of life and to have acquired a certain interest in social as distinct from personal questions. Then, if we read it again, we are amazed to find that the tone no longer seems really satiric and that we are listening to a sort of muted symphony of which the timbres had been inaudible before. There are no hero, no villain, to arouse us, no clowns to amuse us, no scenes to wring our hearts. Yet the effect is deeply moving. It is the tragedy of nobody in particular, but of the poor human race itself reduced to such ineptitude, such cowardice, such commonness, such weak irresolution—arriving, with so many fine notions in its head, so many noble words on its lips, at a failure which is all the more miserable because those who have failed are

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hardly conscious of having done so.

Going back to *L'Education Sentimentale,* we come to understand Mr. F. M. Ford's statement that you must read it fourteen times. Though it is less attractive on the surface than *Madame Bovary* and perhaps others of Flaubert's books, it is certainly the one which he put the most into. And once we have got the clue to all the immense and complex drama which unrolls itself behind the detachment and the monotony of the tone, we find it as absorbing and satisfying as a great play or a great piece of music.

The one conspicuous respect in which Flaubert's criticism of the events of 1848 *diverges* from that of Marx has been thrown into special relief by the recent events of our own time. For Marx, the evolution of the socialist into a policeman would have been due to the bourgeois in Sénécal; for Flaubert, it is a natural development of socialism. Flaubert distrusted, as I have mentioned in quoting from his letters, the authoritarian aims of the socialists. For him, Sénécal, given his bourgeois hypocrisy, was still carrying out a socialist principle—or rather, his behavior as a policeman and his yearnings toward socialist control were both derived from his tyrannical instincts.

Today we must recognize that Flaubert had observed something of which Marx was not aware. We have had the opportunity to see how even a socialism which has come to power as the result of a proletarian revolution has bred a political police of almost unprecedented ruthlessness and pervasiveness—how the socialism of Marx himself, with its emphasis on dictatorship rather than on democratic processes, has contributed to produce this disaster. Here Flaubert, who believed that the artist should aim to be without social convictions, has been able to judge the tendencies of political doctrines as the greatest of doctrinaires could not; and here the role chosen by Flaubert is justified.

The war of 1870 was a terrible shock to Flaubert; the nervous disorders of his later years have been attributed to it. He had the Prussians in his house at Croisset and had to bury his manuscripts. When he made a trip to Paris after the Commune, he came back to the country deeply shaken. "This would never have happened," he said when he saw the wreck of the Tuileries, "if they had only understood *L'Education Sentimentale.* What he meant, one supposes, was that, if they had understood the falsity of their politics, they would never have wreaked so much havoc for their sake. "Oh, how tired I am," he writes George Sand, "of the ignoble worker, the inept bourgeois, the stupid peasant and the odious ecclesiastic."

But in his letters of this period, which are more violent than ever, we see him taking a new direction. The effect of the Commune

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on Flaubert, as on so many of the other French intellectuals, was to bring out the class-conscious bourgeois in him. Basically bourgeois his life had always been, with his mother and his little income. He had, like Frédéric Moreau himself, been "cowardly in his youth," he wrote George Sand. "I was *afraid* of life." And even moving amongst what he regarded as the grandeurs of the ancient world, he remains a moderate modern Frenchman who seems to be indulging in immoderation self-consciously and in the hope of horrifying other Frenchmen. Marcel Proust has pointed out that Flaubert's imagery, even when he is not dealing with the world of the bourgeois, tends itself to be rather banal. It was the enduring tradition of French classicism which had saved him from the prevailing cheapness: by discipline and objectivity, by heroic application to the mastery of form, he had kept his world at a distance. But now when a working class government had held Paris for two months and a half and had wrecked monuments and shot bourgeois hostages, Flaubert found himself as fierce against the Communards as any respectable "grocer." "My opinion is," he wrote George Sand, "that the whole Commune ought to have been sent to the galleys, that those sanguinary idiots ought to have been made to clean up the ruins of Paris, with chains around their necks like convicts. That would have wounded *humanity,* though. They treat the mad dogs with tenderness but not the people who have gotten bitten." He raises his old cry for "justice." Universal suffrage, that "disgrace to the human spirit," must first of all be done away with; but among the elements which must be given their due importance he now includes "race and even money" along with "intelligence" and "education."

For the rest, certain political ideas emerge—though, as usual, in a state of confusion. "The mass, the majority, are always idiotic. I haven't got many convictions, but that one I hold very strongly. Yet the mass must be respected, no matter how inept it is, because it contains the germs of an incalculable fecundity. Give it liberty, but not power. I don't believe in class distinctions any more than you do. The castes belong to the domain of archaeology. But I do believe that the poor hate the rich and that the rich are afraid of the poor. That will go on forever. It is quite useless to preach the gospel of love to either. The most urgent need is to educate the rich, who are, after all, the strongest." "The only reasonable thing to do—I always come back to that—is a government of mandarins, provided that the mandarins know something and even that they know a great deal. The people is an eternal minor, and it will always (in the hierarchy of social elements) occupy the bottom place, because it is unlimited number, mass. It gets us nowhere to have large numbers of peasants learn to read and no longer listen to their priest; but it is infinitely

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important that there should be a great many men like Renan and Littré who can live and be listened to. Our salvation now is in a *legitimate aristocracy,* by which I mean a majority which will be made up of something other than numerals." Renan himself and Taine were having recourse to similar ideas of the salvation of society through an elite. In Flaubert's case, it never seems to have occurred to him that the hierarchy of mandarins he is proposing and his project for educating the rich are identical with the ideas of Saint-Simon, which he had rejected years before with such scorn on the ground that they were too authoritarian. The Commune has stimulated in Flaubert a demand for his own kind of despotism.

He had already written in 1869: ". . . politics will remain idiotic forever so long as it does not derive from science. The government of a country ought to be a department of the Institute, and the least important of all." "Politics," he reiterated in 1871, "must become a positive science, as war has already become"; and, "The French Revolution must cease to be a dogma and become part of the domain of science, like all the rest of human affairs." Marx and Engels were not reasoning otherwise; but they believed, as Flaubert could not do, in a coming of age of the proletariat which would make possible the application of social science. For Flaubert, the proletariat had been pathetic but too stupid to do anything effective; the Commune threw him into such a panic that he talked about them as criminals and brutes. At one moment he writes to George Sand, "The International may end by winning out, but not in the way that it hopes, not in the way that people are afraid of"; and then, two days later, "the International will collapse, because it is on the wrong path. No ideas, nothing but envy!" Finally, he wrote her in 1875: "The words 'religion' or 'Catholicism,' on the one hand, 'progress,' 'fraternity,' 'democracy,' on the other, no longer answer the spiritual needs of the day. The dogma of equality—a new thing—which the radicals have been crying up, has been proved false by the experiments of physiology and by history. I do not at the present time see any way of setting up a new principle, any more than of still respecting the old ones. So I search, without finding it, for the central idea on which all the rest ought to depend."

In the meantime, his work becomes more misanthropic. "Never, my dear old chap," he had written Ernest Feydeau, "have I felt so colossal a disgust for mankind. I'd like to drown the human race under my vomit." He writes a political comedy, *Le Candidat,* the only piece that he has yet composed which has not a single even faintly sympathetic character. The rich parvenu who is running for deputy sacrifices his daughter's happiness and allows himself to be cuckolded by his wife as well as degrades himself by every form of truckling

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and trimming, in order to win the election. The audience would not have it; and the leading actor, in the role of the candidate came off the stage in tears. One can hardly blame them: reading the play today, in spite of some amusing and mordant scenes, it proves too horrible to take even from Flaubert.

Then he embarked on *Bouvard et Pécuchet,* which occupied him—with only one period of relief, when he indulged his suppressed kindliness and idealism in the relatively human *Trois Contes*—for most of the rest of his life. Here two copyists retire from their profession and set out to cultivate the arts and sciences. They make a mess of them all. The book contains an even more withering version of the events of 1848, in which the actors and their political attitudes are reduced to the scale of performing fleas. When Bouvard and Pécuchet find that everything has "cracked up in their hands," they go back to copying again. Flaubert did not live to finish the book; but the reader was to have been supplied in the second part with a sort of encyclopedia made up entirely of absurd statements and foolish sentiments extracted from the productions which Bouvard and Pécuchet were to copy.

Bouvard et Pécuchet has always mystified Flaubert's critics, who have usually taken it as a caricature of the bourgeois like *L'Education Sentimentale,*—in which case, what would have been the point of doing the same thing over again with everything simply smaller and drier? M. René Dumesnil, the Flaubert expert, believes that *Bouvard et Pécuchet* was to have had a larger application. The encyclopaedia of silly ideas was to have been not merely a credo of the bourgeois: it was to have contained also the ineptitudes of great men, of writers whom Flaubert admired, and even selections from Flaubert himself. The disastrous experiments of the two copyists were to lead to a general exposure of all human stupidity and ignorance—certainly, in the first part of the book, Flaubert caricatures his own notions about politics and society along with those of everybody else. Bouvard and Pécuchet were to realize the stupidity of their neighbors and to learn their own limitations and to be left with a profound impression of the general incompetence of the human race. They were themselves to compile the monument to human inanity.

If this theory is true—and Flaubert's manuscripts bear it out—Flaubert had lifted the onus of blame from the bourgeois and for the first time written a satire on humanity itself of the type of *Gulliver's Travels.* The bourgeois has ceased to preach to the bourgeois: as the first big cracks begin to show in the structure of the nineteenth century, he shifts his complaint to the shortcomings of humanity, for he is unable to believe in, or even to conceive, any non-bourgeois way out.

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MRS. O'FLAHERTY AND LIZZ*

James T. Farrell

MRS. O'FLAHERTY and her daughter, Lizz, sat together in the disordered kitchen of the O'Neill household. They had large cups of tea before them.

"I'm so glad you came today, Mother," Lizz said.

"Ah Lizz, you're a good thing, my best daughter," the old lady said reflectively.

"But, Mother, I tell you, Peg will rue the day she took to the scarlet road of sin," Lizz said, frowning as she pointed and waved her right index finger for added emphasis.

"Me mother in the old country always said, 'Sup with the devil and you need a long spoon'," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"It's the truth, Mother. There is no way out. You got to be good or bad. Holy or sinful. Sin, and you are punished. If you are pure and holy and live in the fear of God, all the joys of Heaven will be waiting for you when you die," Lizz said, while her mother sipped tea.

"You say the truth," Mrs. O'Flaherty said, wagging her head up and down.

"Jim and I are poor. But we are good. We live in the fear of God. We won't be poor up there in the next world," Lizz said enthusiastically, pointing her hand at the cracked ceiling as she spoke.

"Glory be, 'tis so," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"Mother, you say he gave her the gate?" Lizz said, frowning and leaning forward.

"Indeed he did," Mrs. O'Flaherty said, wagging her pointed face up and down almost dramatically.

"So he tied a tin can to her," Lizz said; her lips were closed and pushed outward in an expression of knowingness; she nodded her head.

"And small loss, he is," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"I always said that no good would come of her running after him," Lizz said, sipping tea.

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* The following section is from a novel in progress, continuing *A World I Never Made*. Mrs. O'Flaherty has come down to see her daughter Lizz after her other living daughter, Margaret, has come home in an upset condition. Margaret has seen her millionaire paramour, Lorry Robinson, on the streets of the Loop with a young girl. This chapter describes the reaction of Mrs. O'Flaherty and Lizz to such an event.

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"Isn't he the Protestant devil!" Mrs. O'Flaherty said bitterly.

"Mother, I dreamed it. Last night, I dreamed it. Father came to me, and he told me that the skunk was giving the gate to my sister, Peg. Mother, just when you came down here, right after I just nursed my little precious Arty and put him to sleep for a nap, I knew it. I said to myself that my lovely mother was coming down to see me and tell me just what Father did last night when I was in bed."

"You saw Peg?" Mrs. O'Flaherty asked jealously.

"Yes, he came to me in a vision about midnight," Lizz said.

"The devil of a nerve he has. You see him more than I do," Mrs. O'Flaherty said curtly.

"Mother, my father loved you. He always speaks of you when he comes to me. He tells me to take care of you," Lizz said, while from the yard outside, her young ones could be heard yelling and laughing in play.

"Indeed, he should love me. He better. Even if he is in Heaven, ah, he's afraid of me. Wherever he is in the next world, he knows who can make him toe the mark," Mrs. O'Flaherty said in pride.

"And so that dirty Protestant, Lorry Robinson, tied a can to my sister, Peg. Well, it serves her right. Sinning the way she did. Why she was a disgrace, Mother, a disgrace," Lizz said.

"I should have seen him in the street like Peg did. I just should! That's all I ask," Mrs. O'Flaherty said, speaking slowly in high pitched sing song, and shaking a bony fist as she spoke.

"No, Mother, you should never fight in the street. It isn't lady like," Lizz said, smirking, adjusting the soiled rag which she had tied under her chin because of her neuralgia.

"Lady like be damned! Lady like to spit in the eyes of a street walker, and suck the blood out of a Protestant limb of the devil!"

"Mother, oh no, oh no! You should never go beneath your dignity and fight in the street," Lizz said.

"I'll fight that one!" Mrs. O'Flaherty said, flinging her right arm outward and upward demonstratively. "Ah, if your Jim should do that! If your Jim ran after a chippy, I'd split his head open and let the dogs drink his blood," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"Mother, my Jim is a good hard working man. You can't compare him with a rich trifler like Lorry Robinson. Mother, that Protestant is a trifler. He's a trifler, a dirty stinking trifler! That's all he is," Lizz said self-righteously.

"If I ever lay the sight of day on him with these eyes of mine!" Mrs. O'Flaherty bitterly monotoned, almost singing her words.

"Mother, if you pass him on the street, don't speak to him. Don't give him the satisfaction. Here's what you do," Lizz said. She arose, and walked across the kitchen in a clumsily mincing manner, swinging

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her arms as she walked, holding her nose in the air. "Just do that," she said, again sitting down. "Walk by him like you didn't know him from Adam. Pass him by like he wasn't even there. And after you get by him, turn around and spit on the sidewalk where he walked. That's the way to fix the likes of him."

"His end will be a bad one, burning in Hell. Evil comes to him who evil does," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

Lizz went to the wood stove, and returned with a pot of tea.

"You need some fresh tea in your cup, Mother," she said, filling both cups. She returned the pot to the stove. Turning around from it, she said, "And so, Peg got the air from him!"

"There she is at home now, walking the floor, wringing her hands, crying her eyes out. She says she's nervous. She is in a pig's backside!" Mrs. O'Flaherty said, while Lizz again sat down.

"Mother," Lizz said leaning forward with an insinuatingly intimate and confidential manner. "Mother, when she starts bellyaching about nerves, don't listen to her. If she had to work like I did, like you had, the way your mother did, she wouldn't have time to have nerves. She and her lady like nerves!" Lizz put her hands on her lips, smirked, swung her soulders from side to side. "Nerves! She makes me laugh with her nerves."

"She does be walking up and down the house, pale as a ghost, like a ghost," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"Let her! It'll do her good. Let her pay for her sins. If she had little ones like I have, she wouldn't have time to be having nerves. You never had time for nerves when you were bringing us all up, did you, Mother?"

"Sure in the old country, we wouldn't be having nerves," Mrs. O'Flaherty said, and then, she took a sip of tea.

"The airs she puts on! Who is she? What is she? Mother even if she is my own sister, even if she is your daughter, she's a hussy. That's what she is. A hussy! A dirty hussy! Her and her nerves! When my Jim hears speak of her nerves, he always says that a good crack in her behind, and she wouldn't go on bellyachin' that she has nerves," Lizz said.

"There she is, pale as a ghost, walking up and down the house, smoking cigarette after cigarette," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"If she was as poor as I am, she couldn't afford to be smoking cigarettes like a hussy," Lizz said.

"I never saw the beat of her, 'pon my soul, I never did. In the old country, we never saw such carrying-ons, the like of which she does be doing," the mother said.

"Mother, you should have married her off to a good man when she was a girl the way you married me off," Lizz said.

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"I didn't marry you off," Mrs. O'Flaherty said in sudden dudgeon.

"Why, mother, you did too. Every good mother marries off her daughter," said Lizz.

"Glory be, to hear what that one is saying," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"Why Mother, you know you did. And you should have married her off," said Lizz.

"And tell me, what decent man would have her, her with her cigarette smoking, and all of her high-lifing about late at night, and the tramps and high-lifers she has for her friends. Tell me, in the name of God, what decent man would have her?"

"She never could have gotten a decent man like my Jim," Lizz said.

"Indeed, she couldn't!" Mrs. O'Flaherty added aggressively.

"Mother, the decent men in this world want decent women for their wives," Lizz said.

"Indeed they do!"

"If you make yourself cheap and easy, Mother, cheap and easy to get like she did, all you can get is a dirty stinking rotter the likes of Robinson. And then when he gets tired of you, he throws you overboard, and doesn't care if you sink or swim. But if you don't make yourself cheap and easy, you get a good, hard-working, dependable man like my Jim, who doesn't throw you overboard," Lizz said.

"Ah that I was a girl again. The man isn't alive that would do to me what that Protestant devil did to my Peg. That married man!" the mother said.

"Me too, Mother. Say, if my Jim as much as looked at a girl, I'd close the door in his face when he came home. So help me God, Mother, I would," Lizz said.

"Lizz, don't the times change. Sure, in the old country, such going-ons was never even heard tell of," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"Mother, it's the work of the evil one himself. The devil is powerful, powerful if you don't fight him with holy water and the grace of God Almighty. It's Satan, Mother, who's behind it. Men like Robinson, they are limbs of Satan. That's what they are, Mother," Lizz said.

"You say the truth, Lizz," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"The least he could have done, if he was a decent man, was to give her five or ten thousand dollars when he threw her overboard," Lizz said.

"I wouldn't spit on his money. It's money that comes out of the mouth of Hell," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"Mother, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle

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than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven. Mother, mark my words. When Robinson, that dirty devil dies, he will go straight to Hell on an express train with no stops on the way. And may he roast there for all eternity. Mother, when I die and go to Heaven, I'll look down and see him roasting and toasting, parched for a drop of water to drink, crying to get out of his suffering, crying for the sight of God. Because, Mother, to be deprived of the sight of God is the worst punishment a sinner can meet with. He'll be suffering and crying, and I'll spit down on him. I will. I'll spit on him, and tell him, 'Go ahead, you devil, be with Satan where you belong. Burn down there, you trifler! Roast and toast away, you dirty bum! You haven't a swell suit of clothes and money now to hide from the world that you're just a bum and a no-account! Burn! Toast! Go ahead, go ahead, fry away you Protestant sonofabitch!' Mother, that's what I'll yell down from Heaven to him while he burns in Hell. That's what I'll say to the likes of him when I'm in the next world," Lizz said, arising, gesticulating energetically and ecstatically as she went on.

"I often do think how the likes of him would have been run out of the old country on the sharp edges of a pitchfork," said Mrs. O'Flaherty.

"Mother, he hasn't any conscience. That's why he is such a bad one," Lizz said, pointing her finger to make her comment the stronger.

"Since when did anyone hear tell that a Protestant has a conscience. Yes indeed, he hasn't," Mrs. O'Flaherty hastily added.

"And, oh, Mother, it would break your heart. When Peg first met him, she was such a lovely thing, such an innocent girl, so sweet. And now what is she? Mother, she's damaged goods. She's damaged goods. And a man doesn't want damaged goods. When you go to the grocery store, do you want damaged goods, broken eggs, stale bread? Tell me, do you?"

"I'd break the window of him that sold them to me," said Mrs. O'Flaherty.

"Well, Mother, it's the same thing, the very same thing when men go into the market and look for a wife. They don't want women to be damaged goods either. Mother, do you think for one minute that my Jim would have wanted me if I went to him and was damaged goods? I should say not! I was a virgin, Mother, a virgin, as pure as a flower when he got me. If I wasn't he never would have had me. No man, Mother, wants damaged goods. And Peg is damaged goods now. That dirty bum ruined her life, ruined my lovely sister's life. Now, she can never get a decent man. No decent man will have her. No man will want her because she's damaged goods," Lizz said, still gesticulating.

"And to think that I would see the day in the latter end of me

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life when me own daughter would have come to this. Heavy is the world on me poor old heart. But, Lizz, you're a good daughter," Mrs. O'Flaherty dolorously said.

"I'm your favorite, ain't I, Mother?" Lizz said, her decaying teeth showing as she smiled. "I'm mama's favorite child, ain't I?" She smiled again, and adjusted her rag under her fatty chin.

"If I was a man! Oh that I was a man! I'd fist him for doing that to me daughter. Ah, but if Pa was alive, he'd get some of the men that worked on the wagon with him, and they'd fist the devil, they would!" Mrs. O'Flaherty said with melodramatic anger.

"I'll bet you anything that when my brother, Al, comes home, he'll kill that Lorry Robinson. Al has a temper, Mother, and he will protect his sister's good name. Al will, Mother! Don't you worry, he will!" Lizz said.

"Indeed, he won't! If he tries it, I'll take him over my knee and spank him. My son, Al, he's a gentleman, as fine as the finest gentleman in the land. Why there wasn't a landlord in the old country that was the gentleman my son Al is. You should see the suits he has. They're falling out of his closet. Indeed he won't be fighting in the street with a Protestant. A gentleman doesn't be fighting in the street. You tell Jim to beat him up. I'll give Jim five dollars, five dollars, if he'll break the bones in the body of that devil," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"My Jim won't either. My Jim is a gentleman. But I'll tell you what, Mother. Jim will get some of the men on the express wagons. They'll do it, Mother, and some of them are fighters. Oh, but they're fighters. Many's the time my Jim has come home after fighting with them, his face so swollen up that I had to send Bill out to the butcher and come back with raw beefsteak to put on it. Those men are fighters. My Jim will get them after him, and there won't be anything left of Lorry Robinson when they get through with him," Lizz said.

"I'll give every one of them a quarter if they do. A quarter is a lot of money. You can buy five bars of soap with it," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"You won't have to, Mother. They'll do it for nothing if my Jim tells them to. All of them are good, hard-working, decent men, honorable men. They'll beat him up without asking a cent for it. They'll defend a good girl's honor, because they're decent men," Lizz said.

"If they beat him within an inch of his life, Lizz, God will bless them," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"Mother when you came down today and told me about it, I was sick. And she used to be such a lovely girl. Around Blue Island Avenue, why she was the talk of the neighborhood. Remember Mother

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how all of the fellows liked her. Oh Mother, my heart is just sick to think of it," Lizz said.

"Well mine isn't," Mrs. O'Flaherty snapped.

"Why Mother, what do you mean?"

"She, never going to church, God's own house, to mass. She is getting the punishment of the Lord. You cannot flout His will. He says be good, be decent. She is not good. Don't tell me that she's a decent girl. God is a hard man. You can't fool Him. He's a hard man, And He won't stand for her monkeyshines," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"That's the truth. And to think she would do what she's done, having such a good woman as you for a mother. Mother, you must be heart-broken," Lizz said.

"Heart-broken be damned! Let her stew in her juices. She made her bed. Let her sleep in it. I'm heart-broken in a pig's back end," the mother said.

"It's a crying shame, a pity!"

"If my Louise had lived, she never would have been a chippy like her sister," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

"My poor dead sister Louise, she was such an angel. An angel. She was purer than the flowers, she was. Why she was an angel from God's kingdom," sighed Lizz.

"Indeed she was," Mrs. O'Flaherty said.

The tears welled in Lizz's eyes.

"God took her because she was too pure, too good for this earth," Lizz said.

"Well, she is with Pa and me mother and father," the old lady sadly said.

"A pity, Mother," Lizz sobbed.

"A shame," Mrs. O'Flaherty said, and both of them wiped blinking eyes.

"Here, Mother, I'll make some hot tea," Lizz said going to the stove, both of them continuing to blink.

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DREAMS AND LIES OF FRANCO*

Pablo Picasso

fandango of lettuces pickled fish of swords of cuttlefish of ill-omen dishrag of hairs of tonsures standing in the middle of the frying-pan in balls on the wafer of the sherbet of the fried codfish in the mange of his heart of ox—his belly full of the jelly of bedbugs of his words—little bells of the plate of snails braiding intestines—little finger in erection neither grape nor fig—comedia dell' arte of clouds ill-stained and woven—products of beauty of the manure cart—rape of the ladies-in-waiting in tears and big tears—at the shoulder the coffin stuffed with sausages and mouths—rage twisting the design of the shadow that whips the teeth nailed in the sand and the horse wide open to the sun that reads him to the flies that baste the knots of the net full of anchovies the rocket of lilies—lantern of lice where the dog is knot of rats and lurking place of the palace of old rags—the flags that fry in the pan writhe in the black of the sauce of the spilled ink in the drops of blood that shoot—the street climbs to the clouds tied by the feet to the sea of wax that rots its entrails and the veil that covers it sings and dances mad with grief—the flight of fishpoles and *alhigui alhigui* of the first class burial of the moving-truck—the broken wings rolling over the cobwebs of the dry bread and clear water of the soup of sugar and velvet that paints the crack of the whip on his cheeks—the light hides its eyes before the mirror that makes the monkey and the piece of nougat of the flames that bite the lips of his wound—cries of children cries of women cries of birds cries of flowers cries of timbers and stones cries of bricks cries of furniture of beds of chairs of curtains of pans of cats and papers cries of odors that claw themselves cries of stinging smoke in the neck of the cries that cook in the cauldron and of the rain of birds that flood the sea that gnaws the bone and breaks its teeth biting the cotton that the sun gleans in the plate that the stock-exchange and the pocket hide in the imprint that the foot leaves in the rock.

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* *So far as is known, this prose poem translated from the Spanish and the etchings that follow, are Picasso's first examples of politically-inspired art. Expressions of his antipathy for the fascists in the present Spanish conflict, the etchings are part of a series that depicts General Franco in the guise of Don Quixote and other symbols of the old Spain.*

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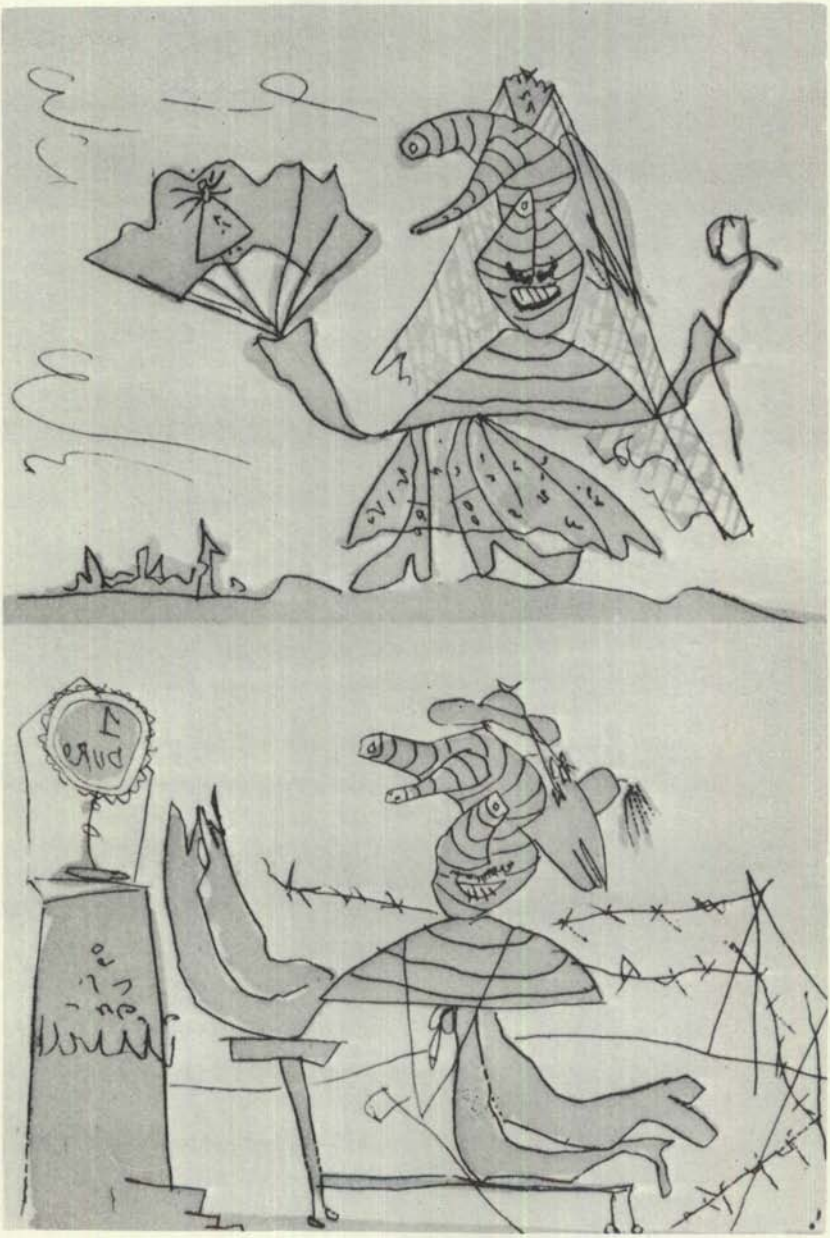

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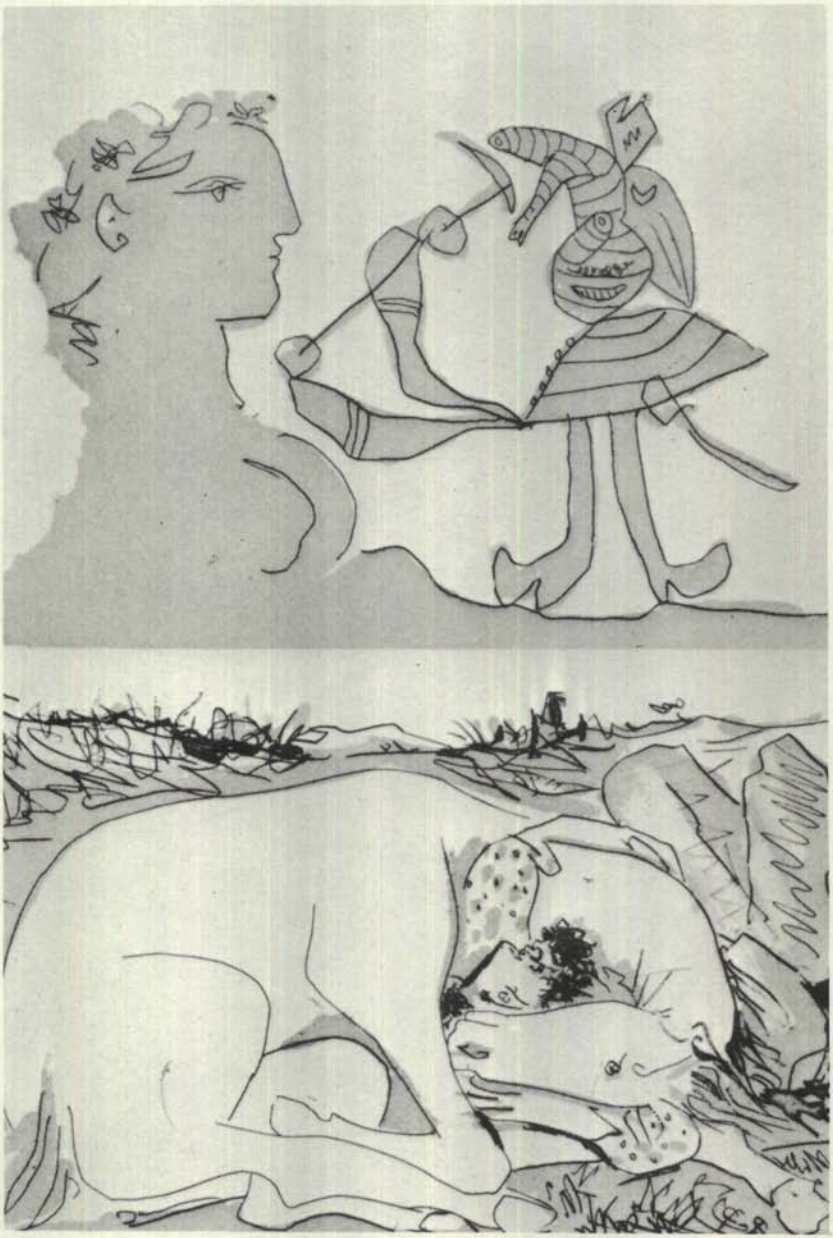

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IGNAZIO SILONE

Lionel Abel

THE HEROIC PEASANTS of *Fontamara* turn towards the city, politics, theory. The intellectual hero of *Bread and Wine* looks towards the country, ethics, the heart; and finally, with mystical hope, on high. Now what is the relationship between these very different movements?

Almost all of the characters of *Fontamara* are peasants, ignorant, primitive, mystified, and Silone particularly loves them for their directness and simplicity of heart. The whole of the action in which they are involved is determined by forces flowing from the city and interpreted by concepts originating in the city. The form of the action is a turning to the city. Two turnings, rather. First the Fontamarans turn as one turns to face an antagonist, and then they look to the city for help. From the city come the armed men who shut off their electric lights and divert the stream they need to water their truck gardens; in the city jail, Viola Berardo, the most violent and masterful of the Fontamarans, learns why these things have come to pass; for the Unknown Hand, a man of the city, Berardo sacrifices his life. I said that the peasants are ignorant and mystified. The fascist thugs outgeneral them in every engagement. But the Fontamarans try to understand what is happening. Their efforts to understand bring still heavier blows. But the blows rained on their heads by Mussolini's armed men do not instil them with a disrespect for theory. On the contrary, these peasants are very theoretical. Not that they are good at handling abstractions, but they do try, however inadequately, to generalize their experience. The knowledge of each one becomes part of the experience of the group. These peasants are not like peasants in the pages of Hamsun and Giono, absorbed in an intuitive relation to the mysteries of nature. They are engaged in a bitter tactical struggle against the mystifications of society.

So perfectly constructed is *Fontamara,* that to get at its meanings one has only to enumerate its events from the time the peasants' lights are cut off until they start their newspaper to answer the political question "What is to be done?"

The movement of *Bread and Wine,* Silone's recent novel, is less pure, more surreptitious, less dramatic, more beautiful. Pietro Spina, an exiled revolutionary, returns to Italy, and disguised as a priest seeks contact with the scattered remnants of the former socialist groups. But there are no such groups. Of still uncorrupted and serious revolutionaries only a handful are left—for long periods of time out of

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touch with one another. Pietro Spina has been most anxious to work among the peasants of the Abruzzi villages, the *cafoni* who till the land of Prince Torlonia. He is overwhelmed by their submissiveness and total incomprehension of revolutionary ideas. These are not the rebellious peasants of *Fontamara*. The armed bands of blackshirts have conquered. Fascism is now a "fact" and as the peasant Magascia says, it makes little difference whether one agrees or disagrees with what continues just the same to be a "fact." For the intellectuals too, fascism is a fact about which it is impossible to argue. Argue? Impossible even to call it by name. It is etcetera, etcetera, the thing which named may bring one bad luck. Men like the doctor Nunzio Sacca hate the regime and support it. Everyone supports it from self-interest, cynicism and fear. The climax of Spina's mounting bitterness comes when he witnesses the hysterical demonstration attending Mussolini's radio speech announcing war against Ethiopia. He hears the crowds massed around the loud speaker, drowning the speech broadcast from Rome, "intoning the magic invocation, calling on the Great Chief, the Witch Doctor, the Thaumaturge, who disposed of their blood and future." Italy has been transformed into the Land of Propaganda, the poison of servility flows in everyone's blood. To raise one's head in struggle against the regime, Spina asks, must one have something of the moral perfection of a Christian saint?

Spina thinks of the poetical and ennobling feelings distilled by Christian ideology in the beautiful and aristocratic girl Cristina, and he wonders whether these feelings cannot be directed to the proletariat. In any case he questions whether it is right that they should be stifled: "Is it right that they should be combated? Is a true and lasting revolution possible without them?" He wonders whether these feelings are not as necessary to a revolutionary as theoretical understanding of the structure of society. For what do men like the doctor Nunzio Sacca lack? Not understanding but courage, that moral strength to endure suffering which Cristina, who cannot accept revolutionary ideas, has. Spina is again confronted with the moral force of deep religiousness when he visits the priest Don Benedetto, his former schoolmaster, and finds the old man a resolute opponent of the dictatorship, a man whom everybody admires and to whom most people are afraid to speak. I must remark in passing that the meeting of the priest and his pupil is the most dramatic and moving scene in the novel. Don Benedetto describes how he was summoned to Rome, reproved and threatened for his attitude of opposition to the government. "The church," he says, "has made religion a drug for the poor people. . . . The spirit of the Lord has abandoned the church which has become a formal, conventional, materialistic institution obsessed by worldly and caste worries." And the old priest calls his life a

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failure. Look what has become of his students, they are all supporters of the fascist regime. "I tried arguing with some my former pupils. I took the trouble of refuting point by point the ideology of the dictatorship, that obscene hash of inanities concocted out of the spurious erudition of a handful of drunken doctors and propounded in the name of the state. It took me a long time to find out that I was wasting my time because those to whom I spoke did not take the nonsense seriously themselves. Nevertheless they are faithful servants of the dictatorship, they compete desperately for the honors it has to bestow, and outvie each other in acts of devotion to it at every opportunity." The only one of his pupils whom he can admire is Spina, and he cannot be consoled by this because he knows whatever good Spina has done "was not because of his religious education but against and in spite of it." But the young man confesses his own doubts, dubs himself a bad revolutionary and remarks that it was a religious impulse that had brought him into the revolutionary movement, even though once within the movement, he rid himself of religious ideas. Perhaps his religious education has made him a bad revolutionary, but without it would he ever have ever become a revolutionary? "Should I ever have taken life seriously?" he asks. The old priest develops a mystical justification of revolutionary activity. "Might not the ideal of social justice that is animating the masses today be one of the pseudonyms the Lord is using to free Himself from the control of the churches and the banks?"

What is most important to remark about this wonderful scene, in which the conversation moves back and forth between the two speakers like a despairing shudder of the human spirit, turning first to one man and then the other, testing the capacities of each in turn for reassurance, confidence, affirmative and genial words, is that the old priest is stronger and more steadfast, and in the end his ethical mysticism prevails. "The evil I see around me," says Don Benedetto, "is deeper than politics. It is a canker. You cannot heal a putrefying corpse with warm poultices. There is the class struggle, the town and the country, but underlying all these things there is man, a poor, weak, terrified animal." When the young revolutionary asks "What is to be done?" the priest answers: "What our country lacks is not the critical spirit. . . . Perhaps what it lacks is men. . . . No word and no gesture can be more persuasive than the life, and, if necessary, the death, of a man who strives to be free, loyal, just, sincere, disinterested. A man who shows what a man can be."

With these words of Don Benedetto the waverings of Pietro Spina end. Henceforward he is no longer an anxious interrogator but a resolute servant of an ethical ideal. "A Christianity denuded of all religion and all church control" can justify his continuing that work

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among the peasants which from a practical standpoint had appeared futile. And here the internal movement of the novel comes to a full pause. A few last tones are indeed still to be heard; Spina is to be pursued by the police and escape into the mountains, Cristina is to follow him and be eaten by the wolves. But these tones need not concern us, they are not real sounds but silences. . . .

II

THE HEART. In *Fontamara* there was the class struggle, there was the town and the country, and man was certainly poor, weak, terrified. But the point on which all hope of freedom turned was not as in *Bread and Wine,* the integrity of man's heart. But I do not think it necessary to inquire further into why the human center of revolutionary gravity has shifted for Silone from consciousness to the heart. Has not the explanation been indicated? It is the absence of struggle. In *Fontamara* there was a mass in movement, which did not ask whether or why it should struggle, but only by what means. And this was not because of the personal integrity of each individual Fontamaran peasant. On the contrary, Silone clearly showed that many Fontamarans would have liked to escape the destiny of the group, but could not. On the other hand the distinctive virtues of Viola Berardo, who stood head and shoulders above the others, appeared as particularly intense and violent exertions of the whole group in the direction of freedom. When a collectivity, a class, is fighting oppression, it *exacts* courage and dignity and the heart of the individual finds itself porous to courage and to dignity without quite knowing how or why. But in *Bread and Wine,* as we have seen, there was no mass movement and the problem of struggle was accepted as a necessary burden by a single lonely individual.

ETHICS. But before a proper criticism of Silone's position on the importance of individual integrity can be made, I shall have to consider the second cause of Spina's doubts, one which is hidden away in the text and not made a great deal of. I feel that the passage I am about to quote proves it to be of the utmost importance.

'But now he had been a Marxist for fifteen years, and it had become his profession. Alas for all professions that have for their ultimate aim the salvation of the world! For the sake of saving others you ended by losing yourself . . . Don Paolo [Pietro Spina] saw clearly that his return to Italy had been an attempt to escape from that profession, to get away from the Marxist bureaucracy, to return to the rank and file and recapture in action the enthusiasm that had originally led him into the movement. This discovery left him perplexed. What had those fifteen years devoted to political struggle been worth? He went to bed but the question would not let him

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sleep. He got up again, sat down at the table, reopened his notebook and wrote:

"Is it possible to take part in political life, to devote oneself to a party, and remain sincere?

Has not truth for me become party truth? Has not justice for me become party justice?

Have not party interests ended by deadening all my discrimination between moral values? Do I, too, not despise them as petty bourgeois prejudices?

Have I escaped from the opportunism of a decadent church to fall into bondage to the opportunism of a party?" '

Now consider what Spina has tried to escape and what he found necessary to reject. It is nothing less than the Marxist party!

No wonder the old priest was more steadfast in his ethical mysticism than the young revolutionary in the philosophy of Marx! Pietro Spina has fled the revolutionary party. Don Benedetto has fled the church. But God can accommdoate himself to personal relationships while social revolution insists on political relationships. God is at least as accessible outside as through the church. But can the revolution be attained without the revolutionary party? The instruments for producing prayer can be seized by the single individual. The instruments of economic production are not so portable.

But the revolutionary party, according to Spina, destroys one's enthusiasm by destroying discrimination between moral values which it regards as petty bourgeois prejudices. An absolute contradiction. Without the party, one's efforts are incommensurable with the revolution, can breed only despair. On the other hand the party destroys enthusiasm. It is necessary to choose and Spina chooses ethics against politics.

What are we to think of this? In one sense Spina is surely justified. There are class values and moral values and the relationship between these values has very likely not been made sufficiently precise by Marxists. I do not intend to analyze these relationships here nor can I. I take it for granted that *some* moral values are indivisible from the class values of the proletariat and others are not. But truth and justice are not merely petty bourgeois prejudices. Perhaps the most profound thing in *Bread and Wine* is the recognition that what moral values *do* to an individual has some bearing on our determination of what moral values are. Now just as there are class values and moral values there is collective inspiration and individual inspiration. When a collectivity faces the realization of its historical role, as the Russian proletariat did in 1917, it swells with an ecstacy vast enough to lift the individual far higher than his own powers of personal enthusiasm. Even the poor peasants of Fontamara, as we have seen,

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fighting a local engagement against fascism which could in no wise prove decisive, became heroic without intending to be heroic, as a simple consequence of the struggle. But in periods of reaction and defeat, when the class whose historical obligation it is to struggle and conquer is marking time or sunk in apathy—at such times the individual is severely limited; without personal resources of moral integrity he must inevitably fall in line and support the oppressor. Moral values, like truth and justice, are his inner-line defenses against the servility that accompanies despair. Moral values are his contacts with the great deeds of the past and impulsions towards the future—his sensitivities to inspiration. A political party which destroys the moral discrimination between values wants agents, automatons, not men.

And it is surely better to be a man than to be an agent of even a revolutionary party. But the question is whether it is possible to reject politics and be a man. Even so cautious and conservative a theorist as Thomas Mann has said that man's destiny presents itself today in the form of politics. Is this another contradiction? I do not think so. For I hold that a party which destroys the moral discrimination between values, which destroys the individual's personal source of inspiration is that kind of party which will also have a disintegrating effect on the spontaneous revolutionay enthusiasm of masses—in short cannot be a revolutionary party. And as matter of fact, the "Marxist" party which Spina was concerned to escape, the Communist International, has shown by its recent history that it is no longer a revolutionary party. The party that Spina escaped to protect his enthusiasm is today the jailer of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Spanish proletariat.

The grave defect in the position taken by Spina in *Bread and Wine* is not to be located in his choice of the ethical against a *particular* political party, but in assuming a fundamental contradiction between ethics and politics in general, in concluding that every revolutionary party must, by virtue of the fact that it is a party, become bureaucratic and opportunistic. And this failure to make the necessary distinction between the degeneration of a specific party, and the susceptibility to bureaucratization of parties in general, flows inevitably from Spina's attitude towards theory, which he says, bores him.

THE COUNTRY. Is this also the position of Silone, in whom Spina merges? Is Silone also bored by theory and distrustful of all forms of political organization? I cannot think so. We must be careful in clearly distinguishing the author from his hero. Did not Silone in his Letter to Moscow protesting the recent Moscow trials attack the justice of the Soviet State and the policies of the Communist Party of the

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U.S.S.R., not on the grounds that these policies and this justice were "political" in character, but on the grounds that they were antithetical to the political concepts of Marxism? And I prefer, since one cannot be entirely certain in such a matter, to interpret Spina's boredom with theory as something other than a rejection of Marxist theory. I relate Spina's boredom with theory to his need for something less abstract than theory, to his greater affection for the peasants than for the industrial workers, to his turning to the country. Spina's object is moral inspiration, and inspiration is magical and spontaneous. It is natural and human to be bored by theory when the heart is sick and the will dispirited, and in such a case does not everyone turn to nature for renewal? So is it not possible to believe that Spina's attitude to theory is psychological rather than political and is not to be referred back to the ideology of his creator, Ignazio Silone.

The city, politics, theory. The country, ethics, the heart. None of these values are absolute in themselves, only the unities formed by bringing these terms together are absolutely to be desired. How cruelly these values oppose and negate each other in the society we live in! Shall I say that Silone has set these values in opposition? But that would be totally false. No man is more friendly to the friendliness of the town for the country, of ethics for politics, of theory for the heart, than is Ignazio Silone. And if he has communicated to us certain doubts as to how and under what circumstances these values can be brought together, be sure it is out of sympathy and friendliness for us. *Fontamara* was a book of hope. *Bread And Wine* is a book of misery and doubt. But Silone's doubts are valuable, set down as they are so simply and concretely with an eloquence that is also a resource of friendliness.

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LYRICS

James Agee

1.

Remember limber thunder in the deaf: the metal tasting air:

Cities like silly medals lay: wind:
Flashed the whole forest pale:

Spasm and blindness blenched and the bunched cloud
Delivered his blue columns.

Remembering thunder: deliberating in the shadow cold: the fuse air:

The paltry metals on that pitiful breast: the wind
Violating the pale forest crest:

Twittering blaze, the hunched cloud
Voided, and slept aloof, the miles
Restored into the sun, the clean sun
Sheened in his scope:

Remembering unlimbering thunder in the deafness and the tinder air:

The pinned and pendant cities: in the woods
A whole year's generations struck one white:

Collaborative, and determinate thunder:

2.

Soft heaven shuts: at length the latest
Plaintiff is silenced and the ample south
Absorbs him unlamenting:

Here, moreover, subdued, the seed
Meditates and shall publish the usual flower:

And he, restored, bouncing on bloodied twig,
Schemes out his spiritual music.

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3.

His subtle throat is broken on the air;
(Reproachfulness, outbreast the wind)
That pointed eye, narrow hands, the fluted bone
Lie with the forest fall.

Yet with the year, shall, with the wrinkling leaves,
The frail shell break, the fragile monster breathe, and,
Falling, wing find air: and talk to god
Much like his grandfather in his time.

4.

Tonight sweet heart I think in graves of the wild earth forgotten,
Straws of old harvest whom the sun ignores,
Bones, and their bran, congratulate.

I do not think they pity us.
They pity less than they are glad.

All that was ardent and which now is air:
Warms round our wrestling here.

5.

Heal, hardy air, harm in earth.
And yield these lungs the while to breathe
It takes to whisper out that worth
Whose cloudy forehead you enwreathe.

6.

Not for your ease or pleasing was the air
Mild, the while past, and loving with the earth.
What for the seethe of health up breadth of summer
I cannot guess, but doubtless not for us.

Cruellest and dingiest of the squatters we
Who wring and craft and tease this field apart.
From the huge kindness of their kingdom's edge
The citizens peer seldom but to hide.

However, there are harms about the heart
We never dealt us, but can only serve.
Serve them then as we must, to further harm,

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And help what can; and meantime let who will
Lift on this glimmered dark his joy, his small surmise, while,
Serious and unregarding, with stiff hands the heavens
  Rust and unwreathe the world.

7.

Squared behind intellectual hedges:
Bloodhounds and rifles arranged to guard:
Be sure: subtly, how cheated faith avenges.

Make the mind only a little too hard:
Suspect too fearfully the irrational:
Your feet will break through tunnels under your yard.
You will be unseated by an unforeseen international.

Have you surely added it up to the right amount?
Shall florid history never split your pot?
Have you taken the animals thoroughly into account?
Are you sure it is still yourself you dream of or not.

8.

Your end's to end forever
  War's wrath, the rotted laws.
But man in his last anger
  Shall kill for larger cause.

9.

Tears are the touchers of that secret earth
No alien rains attend; be therefore tears;
Grieve, and your holy land accords you mirth;
Pity brings wrens of the most batflight fears.

10. *A Nursery Rhyme.*

Glimmer, glimmer,universe
Whom storms of mysteries immerse:
Nebulae not grieved for Zion
The blown seeds of a dandelion:

How I wonder by what rules
Beyond the touch of local fools
In the anarchic spring unborn
Whose front lawn you shall adorn.

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What immeasurable child
Shall your burning have beguiled
Before another picks you dry
And puffs your promise down the sky.

In what city shall that be
And in what strange vicinity.
(Hark my friend we've had our day,
School is out, they're on their way.)

Gods snub each other on our back stairs
The ancient time contemned as snares.
Our galaxy, so runs the hope,
Is mirror for a telescope.

Curved brightness is a beveled jewel
Examining minute renewal.
All things undreamt, one atom's core.
One spark of sand, its endless shore.

There thrive fish the dark sea down
Unsuspicious of our town.
We each are lumps in a same leaven
And Friday's print amazes heaven.

11. *Education of the Prince.*

He must strike down his father's cedar shadow:
Sever his mother's terrible and sorrowing mouth:
Abandon, under their stone labels in the charted meadow
His tired friends, and start the journey south.

Follow the man on the hill with the fire on his back:
Outbrave the monstrous lady of the woods:
Speak dialects, snap twigs deceptively, destroy his name:
He must make the dark journey under the hollow sea.

JAMES AGEE

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LAUGH AND LIE DOWN

Dwight Macdonald

MORE persistently than any other American magazine the *New Yorker* has exploited a distinctive attitude towards modern life. The typical *New Yorker* writer has given up the struggle to make sense out of a world which daily grows more complicated. His stock of data is strictly limited to the inconsequential. His *Weltanschauung* —a term which would greatly irritate him—is the crudest sort of philistine "common sense." But unlike most exponents of "common sense," the *New Yorker* type is spectacularly incompetent in the practical affairs of everyday life. He is abashed by machines, easily dominated by extraverts, incapable of making out an income tax return, in constant difficulties with the gas company, his landlord, and The State. Out of these limitations the *New Yorker* extracts its peculiar kind of humor: the humor of the inadequate.

It hardly needs to be pointed out that the *New Yorker's* contributors are by no means as feckless as, for literary purposes, they choose to appear. Their ignorance is no more to be taken seriously than the ironic humility with which Socrates treats his opponents. Quite deliberately, they prune their talents into a certain shape, and if this means extensive intellectual amputations, so much the worse for the intellect. The magazine has its tone, to which its contributors keep with faithful ear. It is the tone of a cocktail party at which the guests are intelligent but well-bred. No subjects are taboo, so long as they are "amusing." But, as any experienced hostess knows, too earnest handling rubs off the bloom. Moderation in all things, including humor. The *New Yorker* has been known to reject contributions because they were too funny. Its editors would have considered Mark Twain too crude and Heine too high-brow for their purposes. Between reality and its readers the *New Yorker* interposes a decent veil, which would be rent by any immoderate inspiration on its writers' part.

I

If there is an octopus-like humor trust, twining its tentacles around the nation's best wit, the *New Yorker* is it. There are no competitors. *Life* is no longer humorous, *Judge* has no prestige, and the rest are at or below the *College Humor* level. Current publishers' lists

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contain no less than seven volumes of *New Yorker* material.* In thirteen years the *New Yorker* has become an institution comparable to *Punch*.

The *New Yorker* owes its present dominance to the fact that it is the only important vehicle for the humor of the urban intelligentsia. From the Civil War to the World War, the dominant school of humor based itself on the small-town culture of the hinterland. Humorists like Artemus Ward and Bill Nye attacked the big bourgeoisie of the East in their cultural outworks at the same time as their political allies, the populists, attacked the East in its economic citadel: Wall Street. The War destroyed the populist position in humor as in politics, and it laid the economic foundation for the triumph of Big Business in the twenties. In the post-war *Kulturkampf* the provinces steadily lost ground to the intelligentsia of the big cities. Populist humor gave way to sophisticated humor: Petroleum V. Nasby yielded to Robert Benchley.

The new humor was of two schools: Menckenian satire and the dissociative, or dada, humor introduced by Benchley and Frank Sullivan. Most humorists were influenced by both schools. Ring Lardner, for example, practiced Menckenian satire in his short stories, and also produced dada work like his autobiography (*The Story of a Wonder Man*). Lardner began his career in the *Saturday Evening Post* and ended it in the *New Yorker*. This shift of allegiance was probably not a conscious strategem. Even in his earliest stories there is an undertone of satire, not enough to interfere with their success in the popular press but quite definitely there. The shift in humor merely allowed Lardner to say directly what he had always thought about the provinces.

The *New Yorker* will be thirteen years old next February. Since 1925 it has changed little in form, much in its point of view. "The Talk of the Town" and "Profiles," still its most important departments, were established under those names in the first issue. From the first, also, headings were set in the distinctive angular type-face used today. By 1927 the *New Yorker* had differentiated itself from the other humorous weeklies. The scraps of verse and prose conventional to such journals had been replaced by a few long contributions. The first number contained a pioneer one-line joke, and within two years the *New Yorker* had made this form of humor peculiarly its own. But

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* James Thurber: Let Your Mind Alone (Harpers, $2.50)
Clarence Day: Life with Mother (Knopf, $2)
Leonard Q. Ross: The Education of Hyman Kaplan (Harcourt, Brace, $2)
The 1937 New Yorker Album (Random House, $2.50)
S. J. Perelman: Strictly from Hunger (Random House, $2)
Phyllis McGinley: One More Manhattan (Harcourt, Brace, $2)
Wolcott Gibbs: Bed of Neuroses (Dodd, Mead, $2)

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if externals have changed little, editorial policies have been revolutionized.

The *New Yorker* was established to exploit commercially two groups of sophisticated readers: those who followed Mencken and Nathan and those who looked to the Manhattan wits centering around the Algonquin Hotel. Its keynote was: "Not edited for the Old Lady from Dubuque." It had been appearing only a few months when the Scopes evolution trial in Tennessee took place. Here was the perfect, foolproof issue: the clash of cultures in its crudest form. No literate reader but was with Darrow and Darwin against Bryan and the Bible. Furthermore, Bryan was the personal symbol of all that was most hateful and absurd to the East. The editors of the *New Yorker* sensed complete reader-support. Week after week they printed cartoons lampooning Bryan, cartoons of a brutality unique in its history. They ran editorials, articles, eyewitness accounts of the trial. For a time it almost seemed that the *New Yorker* had been founded specially to report on the Scopes affair. It was an extraordinary but hardly an incomprehensible outburst.

On its first birthday the *New Yorker* editorialized: "We declared a year ago that it was not the *New Yorker's* intention to tap the North American steppe region by offering the natives mirrors and colored beads in the form of the recognized brands of hokum:" 'The North American steppe region,' 'the Old Lady from Dubuque,' 'the Pickle Princes of Peoria'—such phrases are literary wild oats. The present editors would deplore alike their sound and their sense. Their sense because whereas at the end of its first year the *New Yorker* announced that its 40,000 circulation was "almost all of it in the city and suburbs," today exactly half its 125,000 readers live outside New York. And their sound, because exuberance is no longer the *New Yorker's* "line." The brash Menckenians and the aggressively sophisticated Algonquins have been superseded by the timorous and bewildered Thurber. The *New Yorker* as well as the National City Bank bears the marks of 1929.

The *New Yorker's* immediate reaction to the market crash was to set a distance between itself and the business community. That week it editorialized: "The collapse of the market, over and above the pain, couldn't help but be amusing. It is amusing to see a fat land quivering in panicky fright. The quake, furthermore, verified our suspicions that our wise and talky friends hadn't known for months what they were talking about when they were discussing stocks." This detachment from "our wise and talky friends" was something new. It grew with the depression. But such protestations should not be taken too seriously. All that had really happened was that the *New Yorker's* honeymoon with the oligarchy was over and it had

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begun to look on its consort more critically. But the marriage has not been disolved.

The transition from the self-confident, magisterial satire of the Scopes trial period to the gentle humor of a Thurber, self-confessed ninny and know-nothing, simply reflects a similar change in the position of the ruling class. The present *New Yorker* formula for pathos and humor is an expression of a deep-rooted uncertainty about itself which this class has come to feel because of its impotence in the late economic crisis.

II

The clearest way to define the "tone" of the *New Yorker* of today is to contrast it with the old *American Mercury,* which in its time had very much the same relation to the intelligentsia. The antithesis holds at almost every point. The *Mercury* gloried in its lack of inhibitons. Its language was violent, bombastic, direct, impatient of restraint and a stranger to nuance. Its humor was explosive and shrill. Its realism was raw, crude, uncompromisingly frank about sex. The *Mercury* would print almost anything *pour épater le (petit) bourgeois.* The *New Yorker,* on the contrary, is anxious to avoid shocking any one. Its literary style is subtle, oblique, its humor subdued to the point of monotony.

What the *New Yorker* has done to the realistic tradition of the twenties is especially interesting. Superficially, its fiction remains within the tradition. It is realism with a difference however: deodorized, deloused, reminiscent of William Dean Howells rather than of Dreiser. The sad, deftly unaccented, dullish little tales of Robert M. Coates are the type examples of *New Yorker* "realism." Coates, John O'Hara, Kay Boyle, and other contributors have developed a pseudo-realism which has all the advantages and none of the drawbacks of the real thing. (In their extra-*New Yorker* writing, these authors are less inhibited.) The reader, that is to say, enjoys the illusion of "seeing life" without suffering the embarassment of actually doing so. These writers admit the existence of sex, but they are at considerable pains to protect the reader from its grosser aspects. They frequently describe the life of the submerged classes, and always with sensibility. Here, too, they are careful not to shock the bourgeois reader. Poverty is suggested rather than bluntly described, and their underdogs are drawn, not from the proletariat, whose sufferings are meaningful and hence tragic, but rather from the ranks of the declassed. They write of minor actors, of provincials drifting rootless in the jungle of the city, of boxers and alcoholics and prostitutes. From these futile lives they extract a facile pathos. The *New Yorker* has formularized the pathos as well as the humor of the inadequate. Treated subjectively,

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inadequacy may be comic. Presented objectively, it yields a mild kind of pathos, verging towards—but skillfully kept just this side of the sentimental.

The *New Yorker* is the last of the great family journals. Its inhibitions stretch from sex to the class struggle. It can be read aloud in mixed company without calling a blush to the cheek of the most virtuous banker. The subjects of its profiles, especially if they are wealthy and powerful, are treated deferentially. This summer President Gifford of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company was presented to the readers of the *New Yorker* in three instalments quivering with sympathy. The muck raked up last winter by Congressional investigators is delicately ignored, and Mr. Gifford is depicted as an intelligent, modest, rather pathetic person, distressed by his eminence and anxious only to live democratically among his fellow citizens. In the deodorized pages of the *New Yorker,* the 1917 revolution becomes "this violent phase of Russian experience," and diabetics are "those dieters who can't abide sugar." The magazine's inhibitions may have a neurotic as well as a social basis. According to *Fortune,* Harold Ross, who founded the *New Yorker* and has always dominated its editorial policies, lives in constant terror of earthquakes, crossing streets, and physical assault. His editorial prudishness is legendary. Arno's once-famous Whoops Sisters had to be sobered up because they shocked him. The other editors are also interesting psychoanalytically. One is a hypochondriac, another can't bring himself to open his morning mail, and so on. One editor suffered from amnesia and ulcers of the stomach until his salary was raised. The Freudian approach would also have something to say about Thurber and Sullivan, both of whom find in humor an escape from neurotic symptoms.

III

Bergson calls laughter "a social gesture." Considered thus, it is a response to the contrast between the comic object and a generally accepted norm. In societies that are flourishing and hence united—such as produced Aristophanes, Molière, and the other classic humorists—the validity of the social norm is unchallenged. It is enough merely to point out a departure from it to get a humorous effect. Laughter is thus a defense of the social order, like the police force, and humor tends to be satirical. But in decadent societies, when all values are called into question, a more complex procedure is necessary. The *New Yorker's* humor is a criticism of the social norm as well as of the comic object. Typically, it establishes a relationship between a rational observer and an irrational person or phenomenon—so far the classic formula. But the observer is ineffectual, and the comic object is not only irrational but also overpowering, so that for all his per-

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ception, the observer is unable to cope with the object. Thus the humorist also becomes a source of amusement, and humor is drawn as much from the insufficiency of the norm as from its violation.

This is not to say that the one type of humor is, in itself, superior to the other. Each is "right" for its particular stage of social development. That the "prosperity" of the twenties was unhealthy might have been demonstrated by the social historian, quite without benefit of statistics, simply by the inferior quality of Menckenian satire. For this humor was of the "classic" type: aggressive satire based on the social values of the big bourgeoisie. But since this class was economically superfluous, the Menckenian humor had a false base and hence today seems forced and artificial. The *New Yorker's* humor is superior because it is an accurate expression of a decaying social order.

The object with which the *New Yorker* humorist so disastrously collides may be almost anything. Common categories are: a personality; The Machine; a series of deplorable but apparently inevitable occurrences; some form of "Theory." Towards these, and indeed all other phenomena the humorist's reaction is a mixture of awe and condescension. He is awed by the vitality of the person, the efficiency of The Machine, the inscrutable hand of Nemesis, and the abstruse complexity of the theory. At the same time, he cannot but feel a certain superiority toward the illogical mental processes of the person, the humdrum, unimaginative practicality of The Machine, the pointlessness of the disasters, and the esoteric pretensions of the theory. Such reactions may be expected of observers who are extremely intelligent but also a bit neurotic. For none of these humorists are precisely Rabelaisian. In fact, Rabelais would probably appeal to them more as a comic theme himself than as a master to be imitated.

The most common of these categories is the first. Two recent successful series belong to it: Clarence Day's *Life with Father* and Leonard Q. Ross's *The Education of Hyman Kaplan.* In social background Mr. Day (the elder) and Mr. Kaplan are polar opposites, but temperamentally they are similar: overbearing, quite without doubt or even consciousness of themselves, bursting with will and vitality, and, above all, masterfully, irresistibly unreasonable. Thurber's splendidly vigorous grandfather (who also happens to be violently insane) in *My Life and Hard Times* is another such creation. Of the three, Thurber's is much the most freely imaginative creation. In general, his treatment of the classic *New Yorker* comic theme (which he, more than any one else, originated) often transcends realistic observation to reach an absolute, personal fantasy. In my opinion, Thurber is the *New Yorker's* most important writer, and his *My Life and Hard Times* (1933) contains the best humor of the entire postwar period.

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IV

In the class war the *New Yorker* is ostentatiously neutral. It makes fun of subway guards and of men-about-town, of dowagers and laundresses, of shop-girls and debutantes. It refuses, officially, to recognize the existence of wars, strikes, and revolution, just as it doesn't mention the more unpleasant diseases or the grosser aspects of sexual passion. Deliberately—for these gentlemen know very well what they are about—its editors confine their attention to trivia. This is not to say they oppose change, since that too would commit them. They affect a gentle bewilderment toward the social system, as if it were some labyrinthine, and potentially dangerous, piece of machinery. With shrewdly calculated vagueness, they pronounce that it is all very complicated, that only experts can understand it, and that they are not, Thank God, experts.

The *New Yorker's* position in the class war, however, is not so simple as its editors would have us believe. Its neutrality is itself a form of upper class display, since only the economically secure can afford such Jovian aloofness from the common struggle. In times like these there is something monstrously inhuman in the deliberate cultivation of the trivial. "Jeanette MacDonald marries Gene Raymond in a church, of all places. Hay-fever people can have their nostrils ionized. Seventy shop-girls swoon en masse in France. The midsummer ice season starts in the Adirondacks. A new purge in Russia. A Fascist gain in Spain. Will Hays authorizes a six-foot kiss." Only a neurotic, a well-fed neurotic, could thus desensitize himself.

But even the *New Yorker* cannot pass over certain crying social injustices. Even the *New Yorker* has its moments—March 13, 1937, and July 10, 1937, to be specific. On the first date it boldly denounced President Roosevelt for his infamous Court Plan, and on the second it gave its support to the newspaper publishers in their conflict with the Newspaper Guild. It is good to know that when the foundations of society are imperilled, the *New Yorker* may be depended on to quit fooling around and get down to business. Among the thousands of editorials which the *New Yorker* has printed in its thirteen years of existence, these are unique on several counts. For one thing, they are almost painfully in earnest, with only the most perfunctory touches of humor.* For another, they are quite badly written—perhaps because it is hard to maintain the elegant-trifler pose when one's deepest emo-

* Quite different is the *New Yorker's* manner when its editorial conscience bids it take a liberal position. Several years ago there was a great sensation in advertising circles: the *New Yorker* had come out in favor of the Tugwell bill for federal regulation of advertising! But, to quote *Fortune*: "When the advertising gentry read the item they found it so swathed in whimsey that not even the staunchest Tory could take affront."

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tions are involved. And for still another, in them the *New Yorker,* with not a trace of its customary fastidious horror of the banal, bases its argument on the same old slogans already worn threadbare in the Republican press. The Court Plan is an assault on "liberty," and the Newspaper Guild threatens the "freedom of the press."

There are humorous magazines which attempt no more than to be "funny" in a miscellaneous way. *Punch* and the old *Life* were such, and so is *Judge.* There are also those with a consistent class viewpoint, and these are likely to be both more profitable and longer-lived. Such are *Punch* and the *New Yorker.* The *New Yorker* is comparatively infantile, but already it has struck roots deep into the American scene. *Punch* gives the English ruling class a sense of the continuity of their tradition. The *New Yorker* gives our ruling class the even more satisfactory sensation of establishing a tradition in a landscape notably barren of such ornaments.

It is worth while spending a few words on the *New Yorker's* criticism of art and letters as an instance of what might be called the Park Avenue attitude toward the arts. The chief quality of *New Yorker* criticism is its amiability. Since to Park Avenue, art is important chiefly as a means of killing time, what is required is not critics but tipsters. Park Avenue wants tips on the really amusing books and plays just as it wants tips on the really amusing night clubs. And it wants them delivered as painlessly as possible. So the *New Yorker's* criticism is, above all, "sprightly." Mr. Robert A. Simon is able to talk about music in the same breezy, casually well-bred accents as the colleague who signs "Foot-Fault" to his comments on tennis. "The Vivaldi concerto had a poetic slow movement, surrounded by a couple of bouncing divisions of a sort which Vivaldi could probably write while you waited." Or: "Mr. Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto . . . was a five star finale." Or: "Miss Andreva was a snappy Musetta, but she gave in to a temptation to whoop things up, and Puccini's music hits back when it's whooped." (Music criticism also hits back when it's whooped.) The least bad of the critics is Clifton P. Fadiman. But he, too, is a master of the "easy" (to say the least) style. Thus: ". . . lovely as it is, *The Years* is just the merest mite dull." Or his summary of Osborn's *Freud and Marx*: "Mr. Osborn takes the first step toward bringing the boys together." The most amiable of the critics is Lewis Mumford, who "does" art. For catholicity of taste he is second only to the lady who does dresses and hats, and in mastery of the *cliché* he is her superior. In a singue issue last winter, Mr. Mumford (1) called John Singleton Copley "the first great American artist," (2) pointed out "the strength and delicacy of Arnold Friedman's paintings," (3) spoke of Burliuk as "a painter who invests the commonplace with a very personal fantasy," (4)

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called Karl Hofer "probably the best-rounded German painter of his generation" and found in his work "a mixture of beauty and terror, of grace and agony that makes it curiously representative of his whole generation," (5) saluted John Carroll as "a diabolically good painter" and observed of one of his nudes: "The modelling of the trunk and the beauty of its outline takes the breath away."

The clearest evidence of the class nature of the *New Yorker* is, of course, its advertising. Its readers are expected to buy Paris gowns, airplanes, vintage wines, movie cameras, Tiffany jewelry, air conditioning, round-the-world trips, et cetera. Interlarded with the advertisements are various "departments," devoted to practical advice on the great problem of upper class life: how to get through the day without dying of boredom. Here the class character of the *New Yorker* emerges with brutal effect. After reading Mr. Coates' tender little stories, after the drolleries of Thurber or White—so fine and free, so independent of sordid commerce—it is somehow shocking to come upon a two column discussion of imported olive oil. From the cloudland of fantasy one drops abruptly to the dollars-and-cents earth of luxurious living. One lands with a bump. It would almost seem that the people for whom Messers. White and Thurber write must be an altogether different set from those to whom Messers. Saks and Tiffany address their advertisements.

Judging from the *New Yorker's* "departments," its readers travel a good deal, are fussy about restaurants and clothes, and follow closely the more fashionable sports, namely: golf, polo, football, squash raquets, tennis, yachting, and horse-racing. They take a well-bred interest in books, music, art, the cinema and the theatre. Their standard of living includes custom-made shoes at $50 and boots at $100 (trees: $30), satin curtains at $120 a pair (not including the labor), jaguar hunting in Brazil at $1250 per month per person, fireside seats covered in saddle leather ("with hand-colored decorations celebrating the chase") at $45, and visits to Baron Pantz's Austrian castle ("The entrance fee of $1,000 entitles you to go to Mittersill at any time . . . at a flat rate of $10 a day.")

But even such celestial creatures, like all the rest of us, have their problems. Really quite odd problems. Nature, the incorrigible, is usually involved. Sometimes the question is how to get closer to her. They buy, at $5 each, painted metal trumpet-vine blossoms, which they fill with sweetened water and thus attract humming birds. Or they install beehives ($21 each) in their windows and watch the bees through a glass panel. More often, the problem is how to thwart nature. They solve the dog-vs.-rug problem with Dog Tex, "a pure, almond-scented liquid." To keep from being awakened too early—in the city by street noises; in the country, by starlings—they buy small

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pink instruments called Flents, "the magical ear stopples." For night motoring, to shut out the glare of approaching headlights, they buy eyeglasses with the upper half smoked. ("Ground to your own prescription and mounted in white gold, they cost from $18 up.") For daytime motoring they have the Sunair Auto Top Co. put sliding roofs on their cars at $250 each. Their women have many special problems, with appropriate solutions. A recent technological advance is the "windshield-wiper" powder compact, which has an arm that automatically wipes clean the mirror when the compact is opened ($6.50 up).

It would be rash to assume that most of the 120,444 people who read the *New Yorker* every week are plutocratic enough to buy $50 shoes and $120 curtains. A survey of the financial status of the average reader might reveal score interesting things. It is quite possible that most readers of the *New Yorker,* like most movie-goers, are comparatively humble folk who are willing to pay a small admission fee for a peep into the *haut monde*. Such people sight well enjoy reading tips on expensive living with not the slightest thought of making use of the information. For all one knows, the center of gravity of the New Yorker's circulation may be closer to Lexington Avenue than to Park Avenue. In this country, of all countries, the class war is complicated by the persistence of the old American custom of keeping up with the Joneses.

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THEATER CHRONICLE

MR. BEN HECHT at the opening of *To Quito and Back* at the Guild Theater the other night must have felt like a man in a new suit of clothes which nobody notices. I am not sure whether Mr. Hecht was wearing a transformation or had actually undergone one, but indubitably the play at the Guild was intended to reveal its author in a New Phase. The creator of *Erik Dorn* and *The Front Page,* the Hollywood scenario-writer and Paramount film-producer, has gone Red. That the full effect of this dramatic quick-change was lost on audiences and critics is in part attributable to Mr. Hecht's own confusion but in the main to the blundering production of the Theater Guild. I happened to see in manuscript the play Mr. Hecht wrote. It was infinitely more interesting, more playable, and even commercially more valuable than the play the Guild produced. Indeed, the staging of this play is proof conclusive that the Theater Guild, whatever its history and pretensions, is indistinguishable from the Shuberts in the bright glare of the footlights.

In its handling of *To Quito and Back* the Guild went in for the kind of tinkering that has made the more groundling managers the laughing-stock of serious theater people; and, as is usually the case with the Shuberts when they attempt a non-musical attraction, the Guild directors, between them, carved the play into a turkey. Mr. Hecht gave the Guild a play that was in essence autobiographical, a play about an articulate, elever man who talked himself to a standstill. But the producers, apparently still under the spell of the old superstition that a play cannot be "talky," proceeded to excise almost all of the hero's connected conversation and to substitute scenes of action and love interest. What talk of a semi-intellectual nature was left the hero they camouflaged as best they could. All the antique conventions of drawing-room comedy were invoked: the characters in the midst of whatever they were saying were bounding about the stage, jumping up and sitting down, climbing over furniture and pacing the floor, going through all the dreary, monkey tricks of what is known as "stage business." When everything else failed, the actors were made to deliver their "difficult" lines in as hasty and apologetic a manner as possible, while every wisecrack was handled as slowly and revenrently as a soliloquy by Shakespeare. The ironic boomerang came, of course, with the morning papers, where the critics dismissed the play as talky. Paradoxically, the remnants of talk in the produced play were just sufficient to make it appear overtalkative, and the patent embarrassment of director and actors only underlined the fact.

In another notable way the producers obstructed the author's communication with his audience. The hero of the play is an American novelist, whose mixed sincerity and attitudinizing, vulgarity and pathos, are peculiarly indigenous to the America we have just left behind us, the America of the twenties whose mood Mr. Hecht helped to set. The awkward, asymmetrical contours of this American type were quite flattened out by Mr. Leslie Banks, an actor of rigid and shiny technique,

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who has been for too many years in harness to the rôle of the English Gentleman to deviate from his eternal and international character.

The mistaken commercialism of the Guild has not deprived the theater of a good play. *To Quito and Back* was never that. What has been lost, or at least obscured, is a kind of curious case-history written by the patient himself. Mr. Hecht is a veteran exhibitionist, and this is perhaps his fullest confession. Here he states his symptoms often and earnestly. The weakness of the play is that it cries for diagnosis. The plot has to do with Alexander Sterns, who arrives in Ecuador on a rather dismal elopement, and gets embroiled in a revolution for which he eventually dies. Thematically, it is a study in irresolution. The hero, who describes himself as "a second-hand Hamlet with a hollow heart and a woodpecker mind," for two acts engages in vacillation, amorous and political. He can love neither a woman nor a cause truly, no matter how desperately he desires to do so. In all branches of experience he is irrevocably a tourist, and his most poignant cry is "If I could only care!" His heroic death, which (to Mr. Hecht's mind) is his final salvation, is admittedly the product of a mood, whose impermanency he recognizes even while yielding to it.

The melodramatic absurdity of the play lies in the Hamlet comparison and its implications. The playwright assumes that his hero's irresolution is of a tragic order, while, as a matter of fact, it is comico-pathetic. It is not, as Mr. Hecht believes, the irresolution of a man who is able to see all sides of a question; it is the impotence of a man who is afraid of making a fool of himself. The play, indeed, is a small, undignified monument of social and intellectual terror. The see-sawings of the hero are a mere objectification of the nervousness of the author. Mr. Hecht, it would appear, has been converted, or frightened by intellectual fashion into giving lip-service to radicalism. Yet this radicalism he does not dare face squarely in the drawing-rooms of New York or the studios of Hollywood. He must transport it and himself (in a somewhat flattering disguise) to a comic-opera Ecuador, where revolutionary generals are just-too-pricelessly-funny, Emperor Jones Negroes are commissars, and the working class is represented by a sentimental servant girl who sympathizes with the communists but knows her place just the same. Only in a baroque and slightly goofy setting is communism accessible to Mr. Hecht. Even there humor must be regularly applied as an antiseptic to idealism. Throughout the play, Mr. Hecht's Sense of Humor keeps popping up like a grisly jack-in-the-box whenever he feels that eloquence may have betrayed him into *gaucherie*. Even his relentless self-revelation shows itself to be a form of insurance, a peace-offering to the perspicacious; and his agonized sincerity must be rated as the final, most vulgar sham.

The temperament of Mr. Maxwell Anderson is antipodal to Mr. Hecht's. If Mr. Hecht has converted face-saving into a minor literary art, Mr. Anderson has built a career on incaution. *The Star-Wagon* at the Empire, while not one of Mr. Anderson's major efforts, is nevertheless very characteristic of him. Once again he has been inspired by a lofty theme, and once again the mediocrity of his talent has reduced it to inconsequentiality. Here the theme is quite as ambitious as ever, but the play is more homespun, more trivial. There were forebodings of *The Star-Wagon* in *Winterset,* in the philosophical musings of the rabbi:

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"They say there is no time but we grow old. . . ." Now Mr. Anderson takes the theory of the simultaneity, the presentness of time, and fashions a period comedy-drama out of it. Two old inventors, who have made millions of dollars for capitalists at a combined salary of $27.50 a week, build a machine which will take them back to any given moment in history. After a short scientific explanation of the machine and the theory behind it, and a good deal of exposition about the characters, the inventors throw the switch and the play is off. They elect to return to their youth in an American village at the turn of the century. For some reason, not explained by the dramatist, they have the power of intervention in the action of the past. They therefore attempt to rectify their errors, and they wind up rich but very unhappy. The moral is that everything is for the best, and if one wouldn't make the same mistakes a second time, one ought to. Charmingly produced by Guthrie McClintic, the play is richer in period comedy than in metaphysics. It is entertaining and quite harmless. To the critic it is interesting only because it seems to demonstrate certain facts about the nature of Mr. Anderson's work.

Though Mr. Anderson has lately been hailed as America's first dramatist, it has long been obvious that he was essentially a popular playwright, distinguished from his follows only by his ambition. Yet ambition alone would hardly account for his enormous commercial success, for many of Mr. Anderson's subjects, no matter how sugar-coated, must have been at least partially indigestible to the public. Neither *Winterset* nor *High Tor* were "easy" plays; the turgidity of Mr. Anderson's verse made it arduous going. The answer, I think, lies in Mr. Anderson's attitude toward his material. Mr. Anderson is a genuine *naif,* a rustic, a Mr. Deeds. He has no discrimination, no system of intellectual values; he is moved solely by his own fancy. In the present play, a joke about bloomers and a metaphysical speculation are on a par, simply because the playwright is not aware of a difference between them. Unconscious of categories, he makes himself at home in the Infinite, because he has no sense of not-belonging. It is his sublime unself-consciousness which endears him to his public. The spectacle of Mr. Anderson relaxing in the Forbidden Places of the intellect induces a corresponding feeling of comfort in the spectator: whether or not he understands exactly what Mr. Anderson is doing, he is put at ease by the utter homeyness of Mr. Anderson's manner. The familiar jokes about Irish policemen, horseless cars, and gangsters heighten the illusion of security.

To this gift, Mr. Anderson, a native middle-westerner, adds a real sense of old-fashioned American symbols. In *The Star-Wagon* there is the inventor; in *High Tor,* the American Indian; in *Winterset,* the senile, learned judge; in *Valley Forge,* George Washington; and everywhere there is the passion for social justice which is visualized in terms of the square deal. In a more subtle way, the blank verse is itself a symbol of an obsolescent American taste. Mr. Anderson's mind is like a musty, middle-western law-office of thirty years ago, full of heterogeneous books, on the law, on American history, on philosophy, and the morocco-bound complete works of William Shakespeare.

MARY MCCARTHY

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BOOKS

THE TECHNIQUE OF MYSTIFICATION

ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY. *By Kenneth Burke. The New Republic Series.* $2.00.

The greatest difficulty that confronts the reader of Burke is finding out what he means. His individual sentences seem to be clear, but when put together they are obscure, sometimes opaque. To some of his writings Burke distributes guides, just as in the present work he appends a dictionary of basic terms. But these guides, like the racing guides Groucho Marx bought in *A Day at the Races,* themselves need a key. In reading poetry the effort to discover what the poet is trying to say contributes to the process of understanding the structure of the created whole. In reading a critic, even when he writes as suggestively as Burke, the struggle to get at the author's thought is a measure of his failure to communicate. And there is no denying that Burke writes suggestively. Suggestively and, unfortunately, by suggestion. Now and again a neatly turned phrase or an old idea restated as a paradox seems to open up a path for intellectual exploration. But instead of thinking a problem through, Burke follows up by dealing with what its form, its context, even the very sound of the words remind him. It is as if someone were trying to provide an illustration of Mill's defunct psychology of association. The result is that there is neither beginning nor end to his argument. Its course meanders into all fields of knowledge where due to Burke's wide but not very discriminating reading its force is weakened by a lore more quaint than precise.

Nonetheless the reader who grapples with Burke's latest book, as well as his previous one, *Permanence and Change,* will find that the author has a position; or more accurately, a position which can be used as a "justification" for taking any position. It is based on the recognition that the mind, or better still, the live creature, brings something to the processes of experience and knowledge. Some perspective of need, interest or organization is necessary not only for the discovery of qualities in a situation but for their very existence. These perspectives are rooted in the physical structure of the organism. The products of this multiform interaction are therefore both relative and objective. If all existence is relational, no description can be intelligent except from some point of view. It is even more obvious that no activity or evaluation can be rational unless guided by some perspective of selection. In any historical period, these basic perspectives of selection function as frames of acceptance and rejection around which the complexities of art, action and experience are organized. There are two generic classes of perspectives—individual and social. Insofar as a culture exhibits an integrated pattern, it imposes (by indoctrination or persuasion) a common frame upon all its habit-bound members. The cultures, "collective poems" Burke calls

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them, discussed very briefly are Christian evangelism, the mediaeval synthesis, Protestant transition, naive capitalism and emergent collectivism (Russia). Cultures present the materials out of which, and pose the problems in relation to which, individual frames are constructed. The latter are classified in terms of poetic categories; epic, tragic, satiric, didactic, comic, etc. These supply the key metaphors into which all experience is translated. Burke recommends the comic frame as an individual attitude within the social frame of emergent collectivism (Russia).

Before proceeding to an analysis of this position, I wish to indicate some of the peculiar features of the book. Its title is quite deceptive. The individual frames of acceptance or rejection are not attitudes towards history but attitudes towards life—anytime, anywhere—while the common frames are themselves the *stuff* of history. The real problem which the title suggests, viz., how attitudes and purposes affect theories of historical causation and programs of activity, is hardly touched on. The poetic names of the individual frames are recondite metaphors. In every case, Burke's discussion of their nature is open to serious question and his identification of the comic frame with the attitude of humanism is arbitrary. Even for an unsystematic writer, the organization of the book is extremely bad. By the author's own confession, the second volume adds nothing to the argument of the first: it consists of repetitious notes, memoranda and irrelevant autobiographical detail which could not be crammed into the first volume. The excursions into economics are amateurish and second hand, and the psychoanalysis is not so much critical as mythological. Burke's ill-digested reading results in a chop suey of proper names, some of them dragged in, I am sorry to say, apparently for personal reasons only. The undisguised animus against critics of the Communist Party and Russia, I shall consider below.

Burke writes as a critic of life and manners. To his credit, be it said, he has developed independently of technical philosophical thought a kind of home-baked objective relativism. The critical incidence of this philosophy is directed against dogmatic monisms which are unaware of the necessarily partial, limited, and excluding aspects of their central insights. It suggests a method which does not outlaw bias but makes it rational through analysis of its origins and control of its expression. Properly understood it justifies resolute action without the by-products of fanaticism. It relates values to facts without identifying them. Unless carefully safeguarded, however, this position leads to two fundamental errors either one of which is sufficient to make the whole position untenable. They are: (1) The tendency to regard what is revealed in any one perspective of equal validity, in relation to a specific purpose, with what is revealed in any other; and (2) The tendency to espouse some frame of reference or evaluation and then, although admitting theoretically that there *are* other ways of looking at the world, reduce them all to special cases of the first by stretching a metaphor or formula. Burke is consistently guilty of *both* errors and hides their contradictory character from himself by calling the confusion dialectical. This shift from subjectivism to absolutism is basic in all his writing. It reveals much more about Burke's thought and purpose than those obvious logical lapses (which we hereafter shall ignore) where he speaks of "a total vision of reality" correcting the interpretative distortions of class attitudes. On his view, of course, it is nonsense to speak of a total vision of reality, for

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everything seen is seen from some perspective, no perspective can embrace everything, and not all perspectives can be held at once.

(1) If nothing is valid from every point of view and everything is valid from some point of view, the question naturally arises: why this point of view rather than that? This question is insoluble except where a *problem* is clearly defined and *purposes* openly stated. Only when this is done has the question a meaning, i.e., can conflicting points of view, attitudes, language structures, be tested. Once a point of view is chosen as adequate to a situation, then the consequences of acting out the operations it involves can no longer be called into question by suddenly shifting to another point of view on the ground of the equal validity of all points of view *in the abstract*. Nowhere does Burke state clearly either the problems or purposes which have defined his choice of perspectives. The reader never knows what perspective is relevant to what, whether Burke accepts a perspective because its adequacy is objectively verifiable, or because it appeals to him for some purely private reason. More reprehensible intellectually, are his critiques of perspectives to which he is hostile. Instead of subjecting them to immanent criticism, he jumps out of the orbit in which evidence for the perspective is being considered, to another perspective from which one does not have to consider the evidence offered but can toss it off with a shrug. This is illustrated most focally in his ambivalent attitude towards science—strikingly similar to that of contemporary neo-Thomism—and in his contention that it is only one of a number of metaphorical approaches to the world. From the indisputable truth that a perspective enters into all thinking behavior, Burke goes to the highly dubious proposition that any perspective can be made to fit the deliverances of experience and vice versa. Nowhere is there adequate recognition of the objective compulsions of the realm of fact.

(2) But Burke himself has a definite perspective for which he claims a superior validity over against competing perspectives. It is a "new cooperative frame. . . . Coordinated by 'planners.' Ideal: comic self-consciousness. 'Neo-Catholicizing.' Ideological homogenity, to be corrected by a *methodology* of latitudinarianism." In another place he describes it as "as return to integrative thought (the over-simplification of which is manifested in adherence to a 'party line')." This ideological homogenity necessarily demands that the whole of art, science, and politics be interpreted in the exclusive categories of a single perspective. Relativism now becomes only a relativity of *phrasing* for the one true line. The over-simplification of the party-line is to be corrected by latitudinarianism, which Burke admits "is another word for casuistic stretching." That is, everyone must *think* the same things but it is permitted to *say* the same things in different language. The task of the critic is to reaffirm the basic truth of the perspective and by studying the metaphorical migrations of terms, to bring them home to roost in the proper ideological yard. The critic therefore is both a propagandist and a craftsman. But his craftsmanship is really a strategy. It does not justify itself. All justification flows from the pivotal metaphor of the frame of acceptance.

There is a reason for this jockeying back and forth between positions. This will be apparent if we examine some concrete illustrations which exhibit the pattern of Burke's strategy rather than the promise of

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his philosophy. Some time ago Mr. Burke reviewed Barbusse's *Stalin.** His long review was built around the metaphor of a public monument. Now, of course, the book has many things in common with a public monument. But it also has at least as many things in common with a dung-hill. Why one metaphor rather than another? Unless Burke introduces his special political perspective of allegiance he cannot make his choice explicable. Here, in the realm of values, relativism for him must have limits. Grant him, however, his perspective. His function as a propagandist completed, we expect him to do his duty as a craftsman. The book has at least one major error on every other page; and even some of the photographs—particularly the one showing Lenin with Stalin's head almost on his shoulder—are obviously faked. What do we find in Burke's review? He is simply not interested in investigating the character of the materials which have entered into the public monument, the fitness of the composition, the occasion for the execution. Here, in the realm of *fact,* relativism for him has no limits.

Or examine his reference to the Moscow trials in this book. After some vague speculations on the nature of identity, he writes "such speculations on the nature of identity coupled with our speculations on allegiance to the symbols of authority, might add (sic!) plausibility to the accusations laid against the 'Old Bolsheviks' in the Moscow trials." He then attempts to show by the inevitable reference to Dostoyevsky that it was not psychologically impossible for the defendants to be guilty. As if the question of mere psychological *possibility* has any bearing upon the questions of *evidence.* It is not psychologically impossible that Stalin should have framed his victims nor is it psychologically impossible that Burke should have plotted with them. What follows? The speculation about the psychological guilt of the Moscow defendants functions like a metaphor in Burke's pivotal frame of acceptance. Here he must be an absolutist—blind to other metaphors *despite* the brave relativism with which he starts. But just when we expect him as a craftsman to consider the issues of fact and probability to which his speculations about identity "add" plausibility, he does a disappearing act. His relativism at this point asserts itself so strongly that the logical structure of his perspective etherealizes, and nothing is left except the emotional overtones. The enormity of this outrage against elementary scientific procedure would probably be brought home to Burke himself were someone to tell him that since it was not psychologically impossible for Dreyfus, or Sacco-Vanzetti, or Mooney to be guilty of the crimes they were accused of, this *adds* plausibility to the accusations. There are some kinds of propaganda which are simply not compatible with good craftsmanship.

Or take Burke's discussion of Dewey in the present book. Having pillaged from him to the limits of his understanding, and distorted him in the process, he quite gratuitously attributes views to Dewey in politics and education against which the latter has repeatedly polemicized. To say that Dewey desires a collectivism in which there are only "rights" and "freedoms" and no corresponding duties or restrictions—a glorified anarchism—is so grotesque that even a super-relativistic approach to texts cannot justify it. For Dewey the content of freedom changes with

* I use this illustration because it exemplifies so eloquently the methodology by which Burke would correct "the oversimplification of the party line." It can be matched with other illustrations from the present work in which they are hastily sketched rather than explicitly worked out.

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every basic change in social organization: but just as he stresses the continuity between the *technological* economy of capitalism and that of collectivism which grows out of it, he believes that the traditions of critical scientific inquiry and respect for individual difference, which were once part of the ideology of capitalism, can in the same way be taken over and *extended* as part of the heritage from the past. Dewey's emphasis upon critical scientific inquiry is incompatible, of course, with Burke's framework of "ideological homogeneity"; but Burke, fearful of letting the authority of party dogma or metaphor meet the authority of scientific method, must attribute to Dewey views he does not hold. This is always risky where "ideological homogeneity" has not yet found its appropriate totalitarian political frame.

Burke contends that a key metaphor is more important in understanding an author than his arguments. I disagree emphatically. But his assurance, (he tells us this in so many words) is based on the evidence drawn from his own case. Let us follow his lead then and see what we find. His key metaphor is "the bureaucratization of the imaginative." The formula applies to everything. It is short-hand for the process by which a possibility in being transformed into an actuality *necessarily* (i) excludes other possibilities, and (ii) falls short of or betrays the pristine ideal. Taken in its own terms, what Burke is saying here is either a truism or an absurdity: a truism, if it follows from the *definitions* of possibility, actuality and ideal; an absurdity if it does not, since ideas and ideals may be framed in such a way that they are not defeated in being realized. However, we are not concerned with this metaphor except as it provides a clue to Mr. Burke's thought. Why does he use it? Because, he tells us, with direct references to Russia "people are thereby kept from being too sensitively exposed to disillusionment as they are affronted by the 'let-down' that necessarily occurs" when the real is confronted with the ideal. Once people think in terms of this metaphor "tendencies toward the negativistic, satanic, sectarian, disintegrative, and 'splintering' fall away." What a revealing juxtaposition of political and moral terms! Learn how to use the formula "the bureaucratization of the imaginative" and you will reconcile yourself to whatever is happening in Russia, you will avoid sectarianism, shun negativistic 'splinter groups,' and escape the curse of satanism (did not Vyshinsky call the "Trotskyites" the spawn of the devil?)!

Burke is extremely bitter about socialist critics of Russia, accuses them of being Utopians and too prone to use the language of moral indignation. In asserting that critics of Russia are Utopian, Burke must first show that every major aspect of Russian policy from its treatment of peasants, intellectuals, critical workers and communists to its relationships with foreign countries and political parties, is necessary, i.e., unavoidable, given the program and concrete situation. To do this he must argue his case on the basis of evidence. This he consistently refuses to do. He either adopts a relativism in which all facts are etherealized or he invokes his favorite metaphor of bureaucratization to blanket the discussion. He begs every crucial question with a display of rhetorical preciosity. Consequently, "Utopian" in his writing is merely a disparaging epithet which he hurls at honest critics of Russia who refuse to "move in" and "cash in" (the phrases are all Burke's) on the bureaucratic perspective. His own function consists in being an apologist, not after the fact, but *before* the fact, of the latest piece of Stalinist brutality.

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It is difficult to name the mode in which Burke writes. It is not comic; nor is it humanistic. But whatever its name, it is in the style in which weak men of minor talent make a bid for acceptance to the side they think will win. Despite his relativism and moral nihilism Burke cannot offer a workable ideology to the political tendency of which he is a fellow-traveller. The stern necessities of totalitarian communism cannot be rationalized in basic metaphors or psychoanalytic myths. Its deeds are too stark and bloody. Burke will find before long that he has chosen a perspective which will obscure his vision. The ideological homogeneity he so warmly embraces will induce a creeping paralysis of the creative centers which means death to the craftsman.

SIDNEY HOOK

THE SOCIAL MUSE AND THE GREAT KUDU

TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT. *By Ernest Hemingway. Charles Scribner's Sons.* $2.50.

Since Ernest Hemingway's recent activities of a public nature have forewarned us of a shift in his creative interests, the news that in his latest novel he has succumbed to the social muse is at the present moment hardly overwhelming. Yet his surrender, after nearly a decade of being wooed and reviled in turn by the critics of the Left, is an important literary event. It seems to have been the Spanish War that finally released him for a trial-flight into new country; and in this he has been true to his own legend. While in its ideological guise the significance of the social struggle seemed to him a mere superstition of the perverse intellect—and many are the sardonic asides he has written concerning the saviors of the world and revolution as an opium of the people—it is something else again to see one's favorite theme of human endurance and valor in the face of physical annihilation enacted on the stage of world events. Once these events acquire a personal meaning, one has gotten hold of the individual link, peculiar to oneself alone, connecting one's old values with the new. And if we are conscious of the Hemingway mode as a whole, the fact that he comes into contact with the revolution precisely through its violence should convince us of his sincerity, rather than make us doubt it.

Hemingway's imagination defines itself most intimately within the pieties of combat. Hence, regardless how bizarre or naive it may appear to most of us, it must be realized that to him the difference between slaying the great kudu who roams the green hills of Africa and slaying the ogre Franco is as yet far from organic. At both alike he looks through the sights of a rifle. And the failure of the novel can be explained, I think, by his failure to understand this difference. In it he tries to reconcile elements that cannot function together and that, in the end, cancel each other out. If the book lacks unity of tone and structure, it is largely due to the contradiction between the old Hemingway manner and his new social direction.

What are Hemingway's values? To be alone, to be inarticulate, to be solemnly male and sense the world through an alert, supple, self-suffi-

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cient body, to face death with simplicity and to believe in it. Now if we take the great kudu as a symbol of these values—for intrinsically the kudu and the man who hunts him are really one, just as the bull and the bull-fighter are in essence identical—then it becomes evident that no matter how noble and powerful this animal may be in his native African haunts, it is ridiculous to put a rope around his neck and lead him down an American street to join a radical demonstration. The great kudu can never rebel against society—he is not in it. But in this novel about the rich and poor of Key West, the protagonist, Harry Morgan, is "snotty and strong and quick and like some kind of *expensive animal*" (italics mine), and it is he who is charged with carrying through the theme of conversion. Morgan concentrates within himself the typical qualities of the Hemingway hero to the point of frenzy. An outlaw, owning nothing but his motor-boat which he uses to smuggle rum, guns, and his fellow-outlaws, he belongs to the breed of killers that live their lives "all the way up"; the most violent character one has ever encountered in Hemingway, his one method of coping with life is to kill everyone who blocks the fulfilment of his needs. The story revolves around the successive murders he commits, and to shed blood is his only real necessity and the only means by which he can convince us of his existence. He and his wife Marie constitute an extra-social unit, a jungle cell of savage innocence in the midst of civilization. He is incapable of accomplishing the social task assigned to him, and when he dies, killed by the bullet of a Cuban conspirator, his Stein stutter of faith in the collective idea strikes us as false and imposed. He cannot breathe in the social air, and once forcibly converted by the author, he must die to disprove him. A character like Morgan can only be converted at the cost of losing his reality; his death is actually the only means the author has of saving himself the embarrassment of watching him fall apart.

But Hemingway cannot do without Morgan, for he has another meaning, a subjective one, one that is inherent in the ambivalent psychology of conversion. He represents Hemingway's review of his own past and of the type of man and mode of expression he had created: through him he is saying farewell to that past as well as testing its usability in the light of new needs. In this sense, Morgan's death may presage Hemingway's social birth.

Hemingway is shy about his conversion. He is afraid of the sentimentality attached to his new role, and of its possible melodramatic effects. Now Richard Gordon, a character in the story, corresponds exactly to the image that Hemingway would like the reader not to have of himself. Gordon is an insincere, false convert: he has changed his politics to suit the fashion and is writing a novel about a "firm-breasted little Jewish agitator" leading a strike. Furthermore, whereas Morgan, with whom the author is to some extent identified, is sexually idealized, Gordon is shown mutilating his relation to his wife and finally losing her. And, indeed, in thus cunningly exemplifying in Gordon the negation of what he considers himself to be, he has purged his novel of those unctuous attitudes that so frequently vitiate the literary products of conversion.

To Have and Have Not is among the least successful of Hemingway's works, although in some of the scenes, as in the description of the veterans running amuck, the writing is superb. Yet it is valuable as an

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instance of a new beginning, as a thrust into a salient of new experience. But it is at this point that his problems really begin. In transcending his political indifference, he has not, however, at the same time transcended his political ignorance; and in turning away from individualism, he will find that the method of inarticulate virility is no substitute for consciousness. Emancipation from the most elementary bourgeois illusions is in itself no great achievement, unless it is but the first step in a development that leads one to perceive the world of materialist relations, and men themselves.

PHILIP RAHV

THE SYMBOLISM OF ZOLA

GERMINAL. *By Emile Zola. Translated by Havelock Ellis, with an introduction by Matthew Josephson. Alfred A. Knopf.* $2.50.

Whatever the motive behind the re-issue of this particular novel of Zola's at the moment, it does force us to mark off more carefully the different stages in his career, to distinguish between Zola the salesman for Naturalism and Zola the Man of Action, between Zola the indefatigable charter of "forces" and Zola the artist into whom he now and then permitted himself to lapse. To put it rather naively, *Germinal,* which represents one of the more conspicuous of these lapses, is something better than one had remembered Zola even at his best capable of doing. Whether or not it is his most powerful novel, as Matthew Josephson maintains in the introduction, it is likely to be found the most successful of his novels that one has been able to get through. And one may improve on Mr. Josephson's compliment—that it can stand as a model of the *social* novel—simply by making certain claims for it as a novel: it is not, as a whole, in need of any such restrictive label. The point of this review, as a matter of fact, will be that it succeeds when it does succeed in spite of rather than because of Naturalism or the attempt to make of literary art the overworked drab of a mechanical philosophy. It will be seen as an example of quite another sort, a triumph of quality over quantity, of imagination over "forces," of mind over lumpy nineteenth-century matter. And in all these respects it will be seen as a particularly timely example.

From such a point of view its weaknesses, to consider these first, are easily demonstrable as effects of the inherent unsuitability of Naturalism, a system of causality based on quasi-scientic principles, to the practice of literature, a matter of grasping wholes of intelligible experience. Despite his determination to be "just" to the Hennebeaux, the Grégoires, and Dansaerts, the middle-class types required by the scheme, he never succeeds in making them as credible as his miners, putters, and others dwellers in the pit. Their conversations at dinner, their attitudes and sentiments, such an incident as the delivery of bakery goods at one of their doors immediately after a show of mob violence, all possess that sharpness of contour which means that they are more the products of an intellectual necessity than of a creative process. The will toward Justice dissolves before the greater will to apply the law of the primacy of eco-

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nomic forces. The single exception among these people is Deneulin, who is ruined by the marauding strikers, although he has always been a "good" employer. Up to a point Zola can ignore this man's role as member of the owning class; he can place him outside the diagram; but since he cannot make him too real without making him seem too sympathetic he is forced to line him up with the other "pawns" on the flat table of his doctrine. Irony is an uncomfortable mode for the doctrinaire; having blundered into it, Zola retraces his steps as quickly as possible. The greatest weakness in the novel, however, is the characterization, or rather lack of characterization, of the central figure of Etienne Lantier, through whom Zola reveals his own most profound embarassment. For to Etienne is given the impossible role of demonstrating the laws of heredity—a relative of the Macquarts, he is cursed with alcoholism and insanity—and of being an inspiration to the miners to exert their will sufficiently to throw off their chains. A dim phenomenon, arriving from nowhere and returning to the same place, moving like a somnabulist among the distraught miners but persuading them no more than the reader of his reality, he reflects the essential contradiction of his creator's career. That contradiction of course was how belief in any great creative movement, whether of literature or life, could be reconciled with a philosophy that gives to the individual so little control of the sources of creation.

It will be a transition to more positive aspects to suggest that in his practice Zola admirably transcends the theoretical recommendations of Naturalism in regard to the handling of crowds and the use of detail. Documentation was the name that the Naturalists gave to the concrete vehicle that literature had always had, and must always have, in order not to possess a body without substance. The peculiarity of Naturalism was not in its fondness for details but in its peculiarly inorganic use of them, which at times amounted to detail for detail's sake. Zola, a notorious offender, has here achieved such relevance because, as will be noted in a moment, most of his details are fused around a dominating symbol. As for his actual rendering of crowds, it is something different from the reference to vague "social masses" in his notes. A crowd is a notion, an abstraction, a language symbol for an aggregate of separate realities. To become a symbol for art or literature it must take on the concretion that derives from its physical mass, as in the plastic arts, or from metaphor and partial individuation, as in literature. Otherwise it retains its abstract character, as in the Greek chorus, the anonymous and depersonalized voice of the collective code. Zola *realizes* the crowd that teems through the middle sections of the book through a wealth of metaphors that would repay close study. But what really makes it come alive is our previous familiarity with everything that need be known about the Maheus, Mouquettes, Pierrons, and others who make it up on the plane of intensive personal relationships.

Zola is probably so successful in treating these people because their experience approximated his own so closely that he could render them without the paralyzing interference of his system. There is also Mr. Josephson's point that he had spent some seven months in close contact with them in the mining region of the Loire valley. This desertion of the *longueurs* of the Medan villa was tantamount not only to an exchange of theory for experience but to a profound alteration of method. For the

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humbler characters in *Germinal* are not the "pawns" of anything but life itself; they are symbols of a deep and sympathetic intuition of the nature of human experience. This is true not only for individual creations, like old Maheu and the wanton Mouquette, but for the relationships between them and the whole structure of the work. The most moving of these relationships undoubtedly is the love affair between Etienne and the girl Catherine, in which the last scene, in the depths of the collapsed mine, brings us back to an atmosphere and a meaning at least as old as the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. For what is the mine itself but a re-integration of the Hades-Hell symbol? The immediate and particular social situation is contained within the larger pattern of a universal recrudescence—"the seeds of a new order sown underground." Etienne emerges from his journey underground to *la vita nuova* of his own and of social experience. Both the title and the heavily rhetorical final pages give support to the idea that in this work Zola was striving to integrate the theme of social revolution with the great tradition of literature—which is, first and last, symbolical.

Chronologically, *Germinal* belongs late in his career, after that long cycle of novels in which he sought to compete with Matter, and at the moment when Huysmans and others were turning from Naturalism to the equally blind alley of Decadence. It came too late to stem the reaction which Zola's own earlier excesses had made inevitable. Symbolism came to mean the isolation of one of the several elements of the ancient pattern that he had attempted to revive in modern terms. But it may not be too late, in the light both of Naturalism and Symbolism, for the writer of today to profit from his effort.

This would seem to be the lesson: if literature is to be effective it had better be literature and not something else, and it is more effective when dealing with symbols than with theorems. To the reminder that "Symbolism" is a discredited movement the only answer can be that since literature cannot dispense with symbols the trouble must have been with the nature of the symbols and the particular use of them by the members of this movement. Zola has indicated the manner in which they might be recharged and reordered for our time.

WILLIAM TROY

THE FABULOUS AND THE FAMILIAR

THE TRIAL. *By Franz Kafka. Translated from the German by Willa and Edwin Muir. Alfred A. Knopf.* $2.50.

Of Kafka's work it is difficult at present to speak with finality. Whatever his meaning, his method is one of mystification: he is an artist of the sleight-of-hand. On top of this consideration, with all the critical hazards it implies, there is the fact that our acquaintance with Kafka's work is still very restricted. *The Castle* was published in America seven years ago and is out of print. A collection of shorter pieces, called *The Great Wall of China,* exists only in an Eglish edition. And *The Trial,* in the Muirs' excellent translation, has only just appeared here. Yet we hear of several other works, at least one of them a major work, which

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are not yet available to us. Must we not, therefore, as Kafka says himself in some connection, "guard against large generalizations?"

Meanwhile, *The Trial* is scarcely less remarkable than *The Castle.* Shorter, more limited in scope, playing more insistently on one note, it addresses itself to its bizarre routine with the same relentless energy; and the tone, ingenuous and rather humdrum as before, invokes once again the characteristic irony. Both novels are based on fable-like conceptions; but while the scene of *The Castle* was a feudal manor with certain incongruously modern features, *The Trial* occurs in a 20th century city where the fabulous confronts the familiar, the grim functionaries of the invisible powers rub shoulders with the contemporary police, the Law exists side by side with the law, and Joseph K., the accused, receives in a modern rooming-house the summons from the supernatural courts. It is not from these juxtapositions, however, that *The Trial* derives its peculiar poignancy, but from the fact that it deals with the most acute problem of Kafka's world, the problem of justice.

The Castle centered around the efforts of the hero (also named K.: a transparent substitute for the first person) to establish himself in a strange community, headed by an arbitrary and exacting caste of officials who lived, almost unseen but universally felt, in the Citadel. The hero's success or failure depended on whether, with all his individualistic habits of thought and action, he could adjust himself to the metaphysical sentiments of community and obedience that prevailed in the village. It was the major question of the book whether such an adjustment was finally possible. *The Castle* has been described as an allegory of grace, with K. standing for individual man and the village for the divine community to which man aspires. *The Castle* staff, depicted as a modern municipal bureaucracy, but of course incongrously complex, topheavy and mysterious, represented the divine order as it must appear to human beings, with their limited understanding.

Now grace, to keep for the present to theological terms, is a condition, a state of being. It includes an acceptance of the ways of divine justice. But justice, taken by itself, is a process, and as a theme for literature it would seem to imply a special treatment: a tragic treatment, first of all, since divine justice cannot by its nature be brought into line with human ideas of justice; and second, a treatment that underscores the factor of conflict as against the slow, accretive, adjustive, factor involved in the coming into a state of grace. So it happens that, while the K. of *The Castle* was always trying to reach the powers, trying for an audience and failing to get one; in *The Trial,* the powers themselves confront the man. And the relationship is incomparably more violent and immediate. Are the powers any more comprehensible for their immediacy? No—indeed, from the moment that K. receives the summons till the moment when he dies with a knife in his heart, he never discovers the nature of the charges against him. And his ignorance is of the essence of the situation, for according to the traditional, which is also the Kafkian, view, divine justice is something apparently blind and inscrutable. Its moreover haphazard and partial appearances achieve a superb dramatization in the farcical First Interrogation scene, where the spectators seem to be offering a divided front to K.'s appeals, only to merge before the end into a single hostile mass. The oppressiveness of the judicial process appears both in the actual sufferings of K. and in

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the stifling atmosphere of the court chambers. These dim and obstructed quarters, like the anguish of those whom the quest for justice confines within them, Kafka describes with his usual flair for the anatomy of frustration. Finally, the deviousness of the process is symbolized (precisely as in *The Castle*) by the bureaucratic character of the courts, with their hierarchies, their baffling system of rituals and privileges. To the inner strongholds of this officialdom women provide K. with a partial access, playing as in *The Castle* the role of intercessors for the protagonist and yielding to his aggressive eroticism with a dreamlike ease. All these factors in the tortuous process of justice, a defendant must take into account if he is to make headway with his case. Yet Kafka's point is that *even then* he cannot make any headway, and that unless he is ready to submit to profound humiliations, a complete reordering of his personality, his case *never* comes up and he dies without a trial. The two laws, human and divine, are mutually incongrous. Such are the conditions of Kafka's universe. If *The Castle* sometimes brought to mind the Homeric world, with its wayward Olympian hierarchy, ravishing and persecuting mortals but winning their devotion all the same, *The Trial* suggests the more naked austerities of the Old Testament, where terrorism is the single source of divine authority.

It is not easy to decide to what extent the religious element in Kafka's work is to be taken as the decisive factor. From the few biographical details available it appears that Kafka was himself a mystic. I take it that mysticism provided him with a final source of value, but that his novels have by intention a powerful secular reference as well. Rejecting the dessicated individualism of the wasteland he raised in its place a set of values derived partly from the past and partly from contemporary religious metaphysicians such as the Dane, Kierkegaard. A similar act of substitution has become almost a classic procedure with artists under a disintegrating social order; and that even now it has not exhausted its possibilities is shown, for example, by the recent work of Silone. Yet, though Kafka measures man by the rigidities of an historically obsolete theology, he must give contemporary emphases to his work and take his materials from the world around him. So it happens that he criticizes not so much man in the abstract as contemporary man. And from this contradiction, which his genius only aggravated, there flows the uncanny clairvoyance that is typical of his work. It is probably not by chance that the accent falls, less on the raptures of those who enjoy grace, than on the miserable isolation of the unblessed; nor that the ideal most eloquently dramatized by Kafka is the ideal of community. And what of his symbols? It was hardly an accident that he hit upon the modern bureaucratic state to represent the forces that stand between man and his desires; nor that he saw the judicial trial as the most acute expression of the relations between the official caste and the humble individual. His ideas, like his metaphors, are two-edged. They have a human as well as a supernatural incidence. The problem of grace is, in human terms, only the problem of freedom; which in the long run is a question of the social adjustment of the individual. Historically, the struggle for the community itself takes precedence over the question of individual adjustment; but literature may, if it wishes, reverse the order of history.

Few writers, at any rate, have set out to assault so many, and such

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deeply-planted, modern prejudices, as Kafka did; and few, accordingly, have faced such creative difficulties. His art is one of dislocation, menacing, aggressive; a chemical art in which accepted values, ideas of probability, and even the usual notions of esthetic logic, are all disintegrated as if by an acid solvent. As his medium for aggression Kafka chose a form that approximates the fable. To rescue this genre from archaism, to reanimate it without violating its nature, meant that he must inject psychology into his characters, and contemporary detail into his scenes; and yet at the same time keep the whole in a marginal province, real and not real, where plausibility could be freely disregarded. Moreover, with themes so antipathetic, he was under continuous pressure to anticipate and direct the responses of his readers. To all these demands Kafka's art was equal, as *The Trial* once more proves. He knew how to calculate his effects, how to command, first indignation and then by degrees curiosity, and finally something approaching sympathy, towards a situation which the modern mind would otherwise have rejected instinctively. And meanwhile he was able, by all the devices of mystification, to prevent the reader from grasping the real drift. He knew also (though in this case the process may not have been conscious) how to suggest in his work his own singular sense of the moral life, its complex but organic character. It is to this conception that we owe the tense emotional equilibrium which is one of Kafka's unique literary effects. Terror and laughter, reverence and blasphemy, cruelty and tenderness—all are to be found here; but they do not clash with one another; they do not occur separately and in sequence: they make up a complex of emotions, steadily present, suffusing the whole work, and somehow harmonious despite the many tensions. Yet for all the intricacy of Kafka's mind, and all the artifice involved in his novels, their final effect in one of a candor almost austere.

F. W. Dupee

MODERNISM IN ENGLAND

CIRCLE. *Edited by J. L. Martin, Ben Nicholson, N. Gabo. London: Faber & Faber.* 1 £, 1 s.

Circle is the first adequate survey of the contemporary abstract (or concrete) and constructivist movements in art. Such volumes as have previouly touched upon the subject were apt to stop with the pioneers in their 1920 stages, and the student has been able to follow more recent developments only through periodicals and exhibition catalogues.

Circle does not pretend to be comprehensive. It is a symposium compiled by two English painter-sculptors and one architect, while most of the featured contributors are artists or critics who have been at one time or another identified with London; there is also occasional homage to their better known forerunners (photographs of work by Malevich, Brancusi, Picasso, etc.). The volume is bound, illustrated and printed with such distinction that even the exacting critic can overlook the infrequent lapses in the editors' discrimination. (Why are there no repro-

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ductions of Arp's work after 1916? Why not choose a more important Léger if there is to be only one?)

The contents of the volume fully document the ideas expressed in the following paragraph from the editorial: "It is indeed fair to say that popular taste, caste prejudice, and the dependence upon private enterprise, completely handicap the development of new ideas in art. But, in spite of this, the ideas represented by the work in this book have grown spontaneously in most countries of the world. The fact that they have in the course of the last twenty years become more crystallized, precise, and more and more allied to the various domains of social life, indicates their organic growth in the mind of society and must prove that these creative activities cannot be considered as the temporary mood of an artistic sect, but are, on the contrary, an essential part of the cultural development of our time."

The photographs may come as a revelation to many American artists; probably few have been aware of the strength of England's abstract movement, and that there have been working in London artists of the stature of Gabo and Nicholson; most of us are even ignorant of the fact that modern architecture, which really started in England, has taken a stronger root there than in any other country, as the architectural section of the volume eloquently demonstrates.

The literary contributions, of which there are twenty-four, differ widely in interest; there are several by painters who write abominably, and others by critics who phrase with lucidity and brilliance, but whose lack of real plastic sensibility is apparent. On the other hand the book would be notable alone for four essays by creative artists of the first rank who can also express themselves verbally—a feat that is rarely accomplished. The long discourse by Piet Mondrian on "Plastic and Pure Plastic Art" is the most lucid key to a painter's intentions that this reviewer has encountered; the two essays by Gabo are memorable: and in the "Quarrel with Realism" Le Corbusier surpasses himself for brilliance and clarity. Even Lewis Mumford, America's sole contributor, reminds one in "The Death of the Monument" that he can write with skill and insight if he can be persuaded to avoid the subject of painting.

It is rumored that *Circle* is to be an annual publication; let us hope that the editors will be able to extend their field and sustain the present high standard of quality.

GEORGE L. K. MORRIS

MARXISM IN LIMBO

EUROPA IN LIMBO. *By Robert Briffault. Charles Scribner's Sons.* $2.75.

Although *Europa,* Robert Briffault's first novel, was admired and even "hailed," there were relatively few illusions about its literary merit. Even its admirers conceded that Mr. Briffault, considered purely as a novelist, was not gifted—that neither his characters, his prose nor his invention exemplified any of the traditional virtues of the novel. To this a few critics (Mr. Forsythe, Mr. Briffault) had an answer ready, for they had previously demonstrated that the novel form was the product of the "shabby bourgeois mind" and an "outworn and artificial" convention:

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so that in the circles which account Mr. Forsythe the Marxian Swift, Mr. Briffault's lack of literary feeling was taken to show that he had transcended the bourgeois shams. However, most critical opinion resisted this refreshing notion and continued to maintain that Mr. Briffault's lack of talent was a pity, not a virtue, but nevertheless felt that it was more than made up for by great gifts of intelligence and anger. And now the same judgement is being passed on *Europa's* sequel, *Europa in Limbo*. It proceeds, I believe, from the familiar Angelic Fallacy which concludes that when a writer is, generally speaking, on the side of the angels—Mr. Briffault is a well known hater of chaos and injustice—he must for some reason be admirable and the expressed grounds for his partisanship sound. In this case the fallacy, though naively generous, can only indicate that the angelic forces are in a state of desperation or irresponsibility: nothing else could make them accept Mr. Briffault's authoritarian nihilism as intelligence or his spleen as anger.

What are the objects of Mr. Briffault's mind and emotion? Capitalism, of course: but chiefly capitalism as it manifests itself in sex and culture. For many reasons sex is a most useful index and symbol of a society's moral tone; all that matters in its novelistic use is the insight and proportion with which it is employed. Well, as for insight, Mr. Briffault writes about sex rather more frankly than the exposé articles of the old Sunday American though with little more perspicuity and with about the same feeling tone. And as for proportion, sex comprises almost the whole of the purview of moral action in both novels.

Indeed, it is difficult not to conclude from Mr. Briffault's books that if we are rightly enlightened about the sadisms of the Russian aristocracy, the perverse indulgences of well-born ladies and the cold promiscuity of female intellectuals, we have a good half of the knowledge necessary for understanding the motives of the Revolution and the chaos of Europe. Of course, the license-and-rape theory of social upheaval—the belief, for example, that the French Revolution was the action of a populace tired of its rulers' adulteries and sick of having its women violated—is well-established and cinematically very sound. But it isn't exactly serious. The sexual habits of powerful reactionaries are undoubtedly very bad (though perhaps not wholly of capitalistic growth: see the classics of satire *passim*) but somehow it isn't very serious of Mr. Briffault to give us European Chaos, the Revolution and the Civil War in terms of perversity or excess. We remember that he is trying to educate both his hero and ourselves to revolution. We cannot help wondering if we ought to go to that great trouble to put off the chains of other people's unchastity.

This, then, is Mr. Briffault in the realm of moral and political action; and in the realm of thought he is quite as seminal. His great enemies are defunct ideas. Under his lash every extinct notion of the 19th century lies perfectly still. Ruthlessly he banishes our last stubbornly-held illusions about the survival of the fittest, the immutability of human nature, liberal democracy, the idealistic philosophies of reaction, Fabian socialism, the aesthetics of Ruskin.

Supererogation, though dull, is not dangerous. However, as we follow Mr. Briffault leading his Julian Bern through the education of prewar Europe and now, in the new novel, through Europe in conflict, the feeling forces itself upon us that it is not so much capitalism, as Mr.

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Briffault thinks, that is the object of his hatred, but rather the human spirit and its whole career. For Julian and his Zena are vocally contemptuous not so much of the clear oppressors and the patent obscurantists. They do hate these, we gather, but their most articulate contempt is rather for some of the more energetically humane and decent examples of humanity. D. H. Lawrence is a controversial figure, so we need not instance the slander of him, but a man's opinions on Mozart, Goethe and Spinoza are an excellent clue to his sensitivity; Mr. Briffault, through the hero and heroine of *Europa in Limbo,* passes on all three. Mozart? The very essence of stuffy bourgeois decadence—makes free people want to open windows. Goethe? An inflated reputation. Spinoza? Our hero does not scruple to borrow where he has cursed: "There is but one liberty," he says, "that is of vital worth: . . . the liberty to think honestly." But Spinoza? A coward and a cheap liberal whose home is now quite aptly a brothel.

All this is, of course, downright vulgarity and expectable from the man who, in his *Breakdown,* advocated a post-revolutionary period of fifty years in which the cultural tradition of Europe would be locked away from the new society. But Mr. Briffault, I take it, is supposed to be a Marxist and this makes the vulgarity doubly culpable. If there is one thing the dialectic of history teaches it is an attitude on cultural matters the very opposite of this splenetic one. But that attitude is difficult and complex, while the attitude of spleen and vulgarity is simple and easy. And dangerous: because it is indiscriminate, irresponsible and ignorant of the humanity it seeks to control; because, rejecting all history, it believes that all good was born with itself. It wants not so much a liberated humanity as a sterilized humanity and it would gladly make a wasteland if it could call the silence peace.

LIONEL TRILLING

NEW ATTITUDES

NEW LETTERS IN AMERICA. *Edited by Horace Gregory. W. W. Norton.* $2.00.

Here is volume one, number one, of a new semi-annual 'periodical'; it is an exciting book. To begin with, it does not suffer from that dreary virtue, promise, which new letters so frequently depend on to cover a multitude of sins. Nor is it one of those collections which attempts to compensate for its inadequacy as literature by hinting broadly at every turn the impiety of being bored by righteousness. The literary competence of these writers is such that they do not have to depend for interest either on our professional concern with literature or on our political piety.

What's more, this competence is not simply a matter of the technical ingenuity which can grind out slick rehashes of familiar and consequently blurred apprehensions. It is not even a matter of technical ingenuity wedded to the ability to define dramatically a fresh apprehension; the bat-like flights from the familiar to the private and eccentric so frequent in the serious literature of the 20's showed too clearly how ineffectual

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even the angels of such irresponsible sensibility can be. These writers are doing something far more important than either of these things: they are learning successfully to combine the best that came out of the 20's experiments in sensibility for its own sake with a controlling interest in the life of their time.

This is no small accomplishment, for while literature in the recent past has chewed valiantly at the social awareness of our day, it has suffered considerably from its inability to digest this new awareness. To some extent this failure has been a technical one; mainly, however, it was the product of an inclination, perhaps natural enough at first, to treat as revelation the awkward dogmas of official communism. The result has been a tendency to substitute hagiology for literature and exegesis for criticism. The young writers Mr. Gregory has gathered together here show little of this demoralizing inclination to substitute the party line for their own consciousness.

One consequence of this new attitude is that serious literature is able, for the first time since it discarded the rationale of Western Capitalism, to deal with moral dilemmas familiar to the common reader. In short, it is once more possible to be entertaining without being insignificant. This fact could be illustrated from any number of stories, but it is perhaps most apparent in Eleanor Clark's neat comedy *Call Me Comrade*. It is not that this story is without faults (the description of the narrator's feelings as she tried to go to sleep in a jail cell, for example, are completely out of focus); what matters is the author's sharp sense of humanity's inability to live up to its pretensions and her skill in making us see and feel the humorous impurity of motive behind even our most admirable deeds. That high comedy of this kind should have been achieved in terms of the new rationale, not once but several times in this volume, is astonishing enough considering the quality of most of what has been passing for 'proletarian literature in the United States.'

But the most interesting consequence of this new emotional balance is a tendency, as Mr. Gregory notes in his introduction, 'to make . . . verse and prose resemble the quality of a fable.' After reading these fables it is difficult to avoid the conviction that the tragic view of life in our day can find expression only in this form, in what Mr. Empson, who first discerned this tendency (*Some Versions of Pastoral*), describes as 'pastoral.' In an age of certainty the tragic view can be expressed melodramatically. But in an age like ours, when the only escape from uncertainty is an uninteresting if sometimes pathetic dogmatism, tragedy must remain, not without conviction, but without assurance. The Elizabethan drama can carry the weight of heroes; but assurance sits on our tragedy(as it did, for the same reason, on the Restoration's) 'as a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.'

This use of fable may appear strange at first glance. In an age of settled values (that is, when a given social organization still provides room for expansion) the emphasis in the fable is on the fantastic narrative and it tends toward nonsense, just as melodrama tends toward tragedy. Thus in Lewis Carroll (but not in Bunyan) the moral references are for the most part (one is never quite sure about them) subconscious, and the purpose of the narrative is ostensibly fantasy. In these fables for our day the emphasis is on the other side of the balance. None of them indulges in the simple one-to-one relationship of an Aesop's fable,

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but the emphasis, for example, in Elizabeth Bishop's *The Sea and Its Shore,* is such as to prevent it from functioning simply as fantasy. On the other hand, 'allegory' is not an applicable term, for the narrative not only has relevant references to far too wide a variety of moral patterns but is plainly not intended to work out completely for any single one of them. That is, its value is not dependent on the validity of some one, or even all, of the moral patterns implied, but on its ability to concentrate references to a wide variety of patterns, all pertinent enough to make significant a fable which holds these references in solution.

One would like to say a great deal more about this collection; about the poetry, which is less successful but quite as interesting as the prose; about James Agee's ingenious adoption of the shooting script to the purpose of a complex narrative with a simple moral referent; or about the dramatic skill of Robert Herring's *Aurochs.* For here at last is a generation of socially conscious writers who appear to be landing on their feet, to have learned, as Engels put it, that 'it is not the poet's duty to supply the reader in advance with the future historical solution of the conflicts he describes.'

ARTHUR MIZENER

RIPOSTES

Independence Plus Literature Equals Fascism

Since the first announcement of the new PARTISAN REVIEW—and, of course, long before anything could be known of its character or contents—the press of the Communist Party has savagely, at times hysterically, attacked the magazine and its editors. These polemics have been entirely political in nature. Their cultural level is suggested by their headings: "Falsely Labeled Goods" (*New Masses*), "A Literary Snake Sheds his Skin for Trotzky" (*Daily Worker,* Oct. 12), "Trotzkyist Schemers Exposed" (*Daily Worker,* Oct. 19), "No Quarter to Trotskyists—Literary or Otherwise" (*Daily Worker,* Oct. 20). In the language of V. J. Jerome, one of the Party's deviation experts, we are "of the same ilk that murdered Kirov, that turned the guns on the backs of Loyalist civilians in Spain and betrayed the Army's front line, that have been caught red-handed in plots with the Gestapo and Japanese militarists to dismember the Soviet Union." What we, in our innocence, conceived of as a literary magazine has become the organ of the murderers of Kirov. Such is the result of refusing to accept the Party Line in literature.

It would be tedious to examine in detail the "charges" hurled at us by the Party press. They are based in each case either on misconception or falsification. Two examples of the latter may be given. The *Daily Worker* charged that our colleague, F. W. Dupee, while he was literary editor of the *New Masses* last winter "had the gall to demand freedom of expression for attacks against the Soviet Union and against the Communist movement." This is a reference to Dupee's efforts to relax the pressure of the Party Line in the book review section. Our fellow editor, Philip Rahv, in an unpublished essay which the Party's OGPU somehow laid hands on, wrote: "The literary Left-wing movement is particularly native to New York, for its underlying philosophy, Marxism, is a product of European thought." This observation, accurate to the point of being positively banal, the *Daily Worker* quotes, taking the precaution to omit the word "literary" and thus extend its scope to include the New Deal

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and the C.I.O. Nor does it fail to point the moral: "This is a typical counter-revolutionary line, which unites its exponent with Hearst and the Liberty Leaguers, who also try to smear Communism as 'foreign'. Rahv's services to the fascists should brand him and his undertakings for what they are in the eyes of all true workers and of all honest writers." According to this line of reasoning, the real friend of fascism was Marx himself who, not foreseeing that Communism would become Twentieth Century Americanism, was gauche enough not to be born in a Kentucky log cabin.

The second category—misconception—is best represented by Comrade V. J. Jerome, who blasts away for three apoplectic columns at PARTISAN REVIEW, which he conceives to be a fortress, a veritable bristling arsenal of fascism. His attack he bases on the same unsound premise that all these attacks rest on: that the professed literary aims of PARTISAN REVIEW are merely a smoke screen for its "real" object, which is to spread Trotskyist propaganda. That we do not consider ourselves "Trotskyists" and that PARTISAN REVIEW has been founded precisely to fight the tendency to confuse literature and party politics—these facts Comrade Jerome chooses to ignore. He prefers name-calling—and what names! "Slanderers of the working class. . .turncoats. . .great revolutionaries (irony here). . .scribblers. . . amateur literati. . .tyros. . .agents provocateurs . . . strikebreakers. . . ."

In one passage Comrade Jerome, with his peculiar flair for melodrama, pictured us as being "wined and dined as high personalities" by the appreciative bourgeoisie. This puzzles us. We respect Comrade Jerome as an expert in wining and dining, considering his past services as Commissar to Hollywood, where he was,as we hear, lavishly entertained. But nothing so glamorous has yet happened to any of us. We hope the bourgeoisie will realize the value of our services before long and do its duty. When the gay round of cocktail parties and buffet suppers begins, we shall be glad to ask Comrade Jerome along. Of course, he mustn't expect too much—New York isn't Hollywood.

One must smile at the sweating, blundering zeal of the Party's commissars of culture, who bring to bear against PARTISAN REVIEW such a ponderous machinery of polemic. But there is more in the situation than humor. It is painful to us, as radicals, to realize the intellectual bankruptcy of the Communist Party leadership. One of our motives in reviving PARTISAN REVIEW was to struggle against the "partyization" of left-wing letters. We hoped to demonstrate the degenerative effect of imposing a Party Line on Literature. The press of the Communist Party is supplying us, gratis, with some excellent examples of just what we mean.

That Man Is Here Again

Ever since Granville Hicks made his debut as a Marxist critic, he seems to have regarded himself as a superintendent of American writing. No sooner had he announced his own conversion than he proceeded to submit American writers since the Civil War to an examination in Marxism, which, of course, most of them flunked. Subsequently he brought his critical method up to date by evaluating contemporary writers according to their proximity to the official Communist Party; he banished to a literary Siberia those who had other political beliefs or were truly independent; he laid down a series of rules for young and newly converted novelists, and set a quota for the number of magazines which might publish left-wing writing.

One of his chief tasks, however, was to deliver pep-talks to those writers who did not share his blatant cheerfulness—his theory being that the class struggle is expressed in literature as a struggle between pessimism and optimism; and identifying optimism with the future of mankind, he set out on a crusade against gloom in American writing. Thus in a recent review (*New Masses,* October 4) of *New Letters in America,* Hicks stated that he was very much disappointed in this collection because hope was not its

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keynote. "They could scarcely write more bleakly," says Hicks, "if they were avowed Spenglerians, or felt, with Joseph Wood Krutch, that the triumph of the proletariat would mean the end of civilization; and "the prose writers express disgust, bitterness, pity, cynicism, but seldom hope." And when you consider that the Spenglerians have in their ranks not only younger writers, but, as Hicks later adds, such well-known figures as Dos Passos, Farrell, Cantwell, and Caldwell, the menace of gloom is very great indeed. True, Hicks does admit that the Spenglerians are by far the more talented writers, and he advocates, therefore, that they be tolerated, but so far as the direction of literature is concerned Hicks takes an unequivocal stand on the side of optimism.

Naturally, no one could be opposed in principle to optimism, so long as it is not mere ideological cheerleading, and it is not difficult to understand why Hicks, whose passion for pigeonholing experience offered him but two alternatives, should have chosen hope in preference to despair. But it requires a critic of Mr. Hicks' simple-minded fanaticism to squeeze the qualities and meanings of literature into such naive categories, and to persuade his readers that the hope of American literature is in such writers as Jack Conroy and Fielding Burke, whom he lists among the apostles of optimism. Then, too, there arises the problem of deviations, for writers who are not pessimists may still not be out and out opitimists. Would Granville Hicks say that the optimism of Bruce Barton, for example, is good in form but bad in content?

Culture as Conspirator

Garcia Lorca's career as poet, collector of Spanish folk-music and impresario of the native drama was brought to an abrupt and shocking end by a fascist firing-squad in Granada in the early weeks of the Spanish war. Lorca died in his middle thirties: he was already an accomplished poet, in a vein of popular and indigenous expression which contrasted markedly with the Europeanizing tendency of the Madrid intellectuals. And the high degree of sophistication in his work promised a still more mature poetry to come. (For examples of Lorca's work see *Lament for the Death of a Bullfighter,* by Federico Garcia Lorca. Oxford. $2.50). The democratic character of Lorca's poetry leaves in little doubt the general tendency of his political sympathies; yet, at the time of his death, he was not known to have any very definite political convictions. His execution appears, then, to have been the result of some brutal bureaucratic "error" on the part of the Granada fascists. A possible clue to the means by which he became implicated in the anti-fascist cause has been supplied by Rolfe Humphries (*The Nation,* September 18): Lorca's sister lived in a house owned by the Popular Front mayor of Granada! But, as Mr. Humphries adds, "More probably the fascists recognized in him the kind of person they were eager to get rid of." And whatever the exact circumstances of Lorca's death, we are at liberty to see in it something more than a grievous individual tragedy. If a single poet may be shot down as a political conspirator, so, in effect, may a whole culture.

(RIPOSTES *is a department devoted to brief editorial comment and to communications. Readers are invited to contribute.*)

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